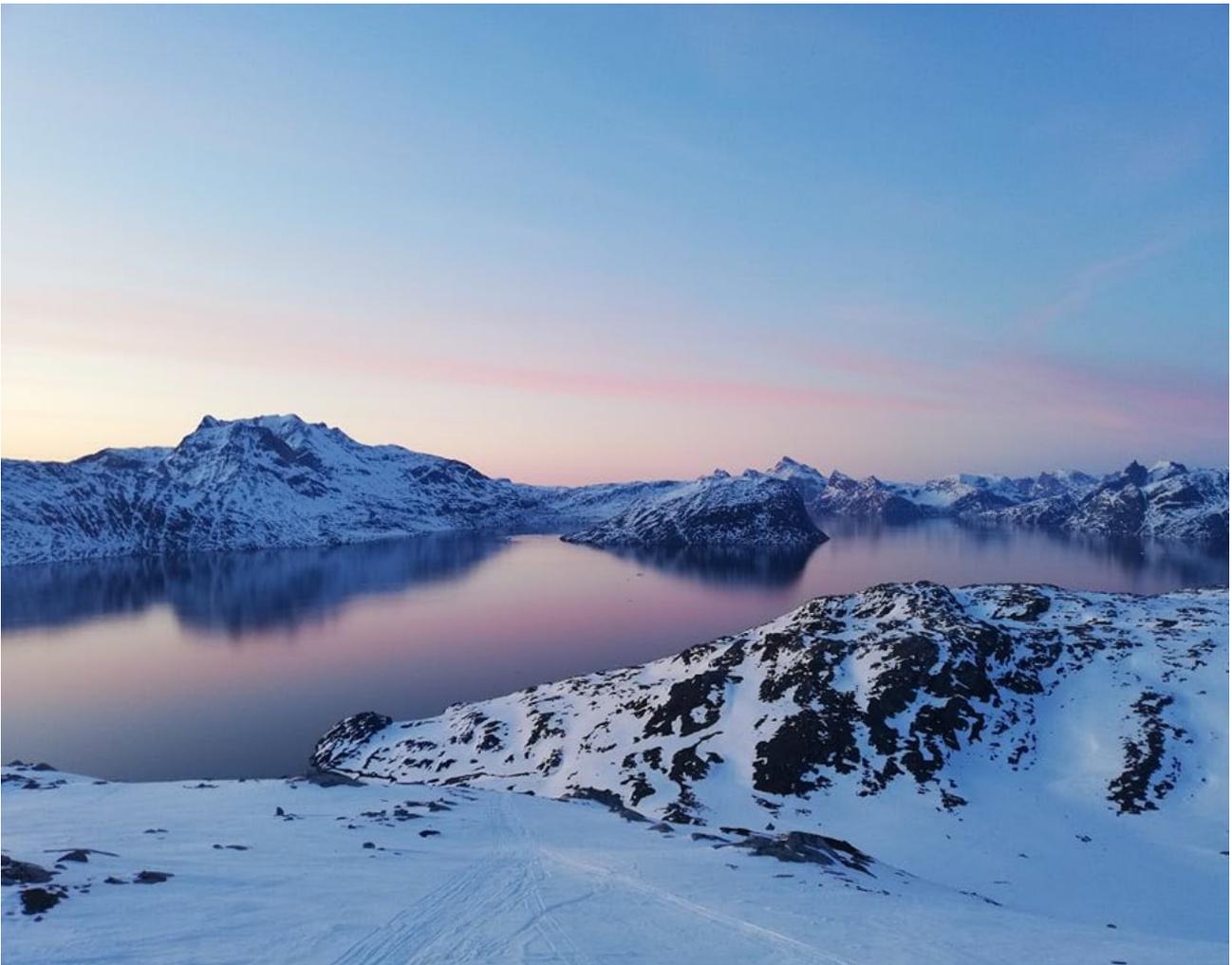


How should the Kingdom of Denmark react to the increased foreign interference in the coming Arctic strategy?

An investigation of Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland



A thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Social Sciences in International Security and Law

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Summary

This thesis sets out to investigate how the Kingdom of Denmark should react to the increased Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland in its coming strategy. This interference challenges the theory of Arctic Exceptionalism, the idea the current Arctic strategy relies on. A new Arctic strategy for the Kingdom of Denmark will be outlined in 2020 and these new challenges should be taken into account.

To answer the research question, this thesis argues that the intensified competition and interference breaks with the idea of the region as isolated from conflicts in other regions. By using the method of Applied History, the analysis interrelates past and present events to identify a pattern of behaviour similar to the Cold War. This is done to use former lessons to help make better choices on how to handle the increased foreign interference in Greenland. Denmark and Greenland have different perceptions of whether this foreign interference is a threat or not, which is briefly related to Copenhagen School's theory on securitisation.

The thesis deploys Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle's theoretical framework on strategic narratives to categorise and analyse the interference identified. It is found that China is primarily driven by economic interests concerning their Belt and Road Initiative. But due to interlinkage between Chinese investment and the political system, there is reason to believe that investments could be dual-use. Russia has a watchful eye on Greenland because the increased US interference in Greenland is a threat to Russia's position as Arctic leader. The US interference is motivated by national security due to the geostrategic importance of the island.

The thesis discusses how the increased interference influences the Kingdom of Denmark both externally and internally. It is found that even though the pattern of behaviour is similar to the Cold War, the motivations are not the same, and the current tensions cannot be labelled as Naill Ferguson's idea of a Cold War 2.0. Instead, the thesis agrees with Danita Burke's idea of calling the current tension a new Cold War a 'dangerous myth'. Military activities do not necessarily equal war. From this, the thesis develops a set of recommendations for adaption to a more competitive Arctic that can be included in the future Arctic Strategy of the Kingdom of Denmark.

List of Abbreviations

- AE - Arctic Exceptionalism
- BRI - Belt and Road Initiative
- CCCC - China Communications Construction Company
- DDIS - Danish Defence Intelligence Service
- DKK - Danish krone
- EXIM - Export-Import Bank of China
- FM – Foreign Minister
- GIUK Gap - Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap
- KoD - Kingdom of Denmark
- NSR - Northern Sea Route
- PM - Prime Minister
- WW2 - Second World War

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Part I: Introduction and foundation

Introduction

In 2019, the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) judged the great power tensions in the Arctic region to be the most substantial threat to the Kingdom of Denmark¹ (KoD) (DDIS, 2019, p. 11). This happened at a time when the KoD was working on a new Arctic strategy – which is still being developed as of June 2020. The question is, therefore, how the unfolding power game between China, Russia, and the US should be approached. The current Arctic strategy from 2011 seeks to ensure ‘*a peaceful, secure and collaborative Arctic*’ (The Kingdom of Denmark, 2011, p. 7). These ambitions correspond with the theory of Arctic Exceptionalism (AE) that has characterised the region since the end of the Cold War (Gorbachev, 1987; The Kingdom of Denmark, 2011). In the current strategy, the main security policy challenges are to avoid tensions in the region, which the strategy prevents by supporting cooperation through regional institutions like the Arctic Council (AC) (The Kingdom of Denmark, 2011, p. 10). But the security environment has changed dramatically since 2011 into an arena of international politics, where China, Russia, and the US are arm-wrestling over their interests in the Arctic, which in this thesis is defined as the geographic area around the North Pole.

With Greenland’s strategic location in the Arctic region and the economic potential of finding natural resources under the melting ice cap, the island has become the centre of attention in global politics. This is despite the shared ambition for Arctic stability and co-existence that was written down in the Ilulissat Declaration 2008 (Ilulissat Declaration, 2008). The ambitions of AE did not erase the security issues in the Arctic, but until recently the competitors had been focused elsewhere. Now, the Arctic has reverted to a competitive zone for the great powers due to their different interests in the region. This creates a need for the coming Arctic strategy to deal with the region in light of increased competition.

These tensions challenge the Danish-Greenlandic relationship because of different wishes for the future. Greenland strives for independence and welcomes foreign investments in the hope of getting rid of the Danish block grant, while Denmark wants to enjoy the influence that comes with being a ‘major Arctic power’ (Breum, 2018, p. 57). This is the complicated starting point for a new Arctic strategy and challenges the foundation of the current strategy because the region is no longer ‘*a*

¹ The Kingdom of Denmark consists of Denmark, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland

peaceful, secure and collaborative Arctic' (The Kingdom of Denmark, 2011, p. 7). The coming strategy is expected to focus on cooperation as the main goal; the question is how this will be done in the context of the renewed great power tensions. Therefore, this thesis investigates how the foreign interference should be approached. The central research question of this thesis is:

How should the Kingdom of Denmark react to increased Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland in the coming Arctic strategy?

To answer the research question, this thesis argues that a strategy based on AE is no longer sufficient to counter the intensified great power interference in Greenland. The foreign interference in Greenland is similar to patterns of behaviour seen during the Cold War, which here are seen to consist of two elements. First, a sharp ideological confrontation and second, a military confrontation, which was seen as an armament race (Splidsboel Hansen, 2018). The US and Russia are again militarising the Arctic region due to a worsened relationship. Also, the US and China follow different sets of rules in the Arctic and compete ideologically to be the most dominant player globally. These issues are now influencing Greenland and have led to clashes between the US on one side and Russia and China on the other. This thesis will argue that US interference in Greenland originates from a wish to protect its national security because Greenland works as a forwarded defence and has done so since the Second World War (WW2). Meanwhile, Russian interference is driven by a defensive wish to protect its status as the Arctic leader and the status quo in the region. Therefore, Russia is not specifically interested in Greenland as such but more in preventing the US from gaining more influence in Greenland. China is a new player in the Arctic and its interference in Greenland is mainly economically motivated by a wish to integrate Greenland into its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and to exploit natural resources, but there is a risk of dual-use of Chinese investment in Greenland.

These renewed tensions have made Greenland strategically important again, leading to the argument that the value of Greenland depends on the dynamics in international politics, such as during WW2 and the Cold War. Now the region can no longer be seen as isolated from conflicts. Therefore, AE does not apply to Greenland currently, and instead this thesis will build on Niall Ferguson's argument that the current tensions are similar to a Cold War 2.0 (Ferguson, 2019). The renewed competition and interference in Greenland have strong similarities to the Cold War, which

is why it might be appropriate to announce the onset of a new Cold War. But as Danita Burke, Fellow at the Centre for War Studies at the University of Southern Denmark, argues, the reality is that the end of AE is not equal to a Cold War 2.0 and that it is a ‘dangerous myth’ (Burke, 2019). Instead, AE has only been possible because the importance of the Arctic and Greenland were marginalised. Now the region should be framed as more competitive, which the KoD’s new Arctic strategy should take its starting point from.

To support this argument, the thesis facilitates an analysis based on the method of Applied History, which interrelates past and present events relating to great power tensions to identify analogies equal to Cold War 2.0. By using events from the past, it is possible to find clues about what is likely to happen around Greenland in the future and thereby how the KoD should react to the increased foreign interference. These findings will be analysed and categorised using theories on strategic narratives to understand the underlying motivations and ambitions that drive the actors’ interference in Greenland. Based on these findings, it will be argued that AE is not the right label for the political climate of the region any longer. Instead, the thesis will make recommendations to the KoD’s new Arctic strategy on how to handle the more competitive dynamics influencing the Arctic region.

Several dissertations have been written on the ongoing power play in the Arctic region and the specific interference of China, Russia, and the US in Greenland. However, the approach has focused on other related subjects, and those who have focused on Greenland have either done so without looking at the historical perspective or strategic narratives or have focused on only one of the actors. Also, several authors have investigated correlated subjects. From the literature review, it was observed that the current literature can mostly be divided into two categories relevant to this thesis: one branch of literature seeks to explain the developments in the Arctic and Greenland from a historical perspective, while the other seeks to examine the power play between China, Russia, and the US in the Arctic region.

One example of the historical approach is the work of geopolitics expert Charles Emmerson in *The Future History of the Arctic* (2011). The core argument and methodical approach of his study of the Arctic region are based on that ‘*the past does not determine the future, but it moulds it*’ (Emmerson, 2011, p. 7). He offers a view on how ideas of the future Arctic emerged, what the ideas of multiple

actors have meant and to what extent these ideas have been influenced by the past (Emmerson, 2011, p. 6). In this way, his work explores the history of the region to understand the actors' motivations, ambitions, and fears, which has given the author of this thesis a better understanding of how the history of the region has influenced and is still influencing today's dynamics. This supports the idea of applying history to the Arctic region – in this case Greenland – by interrelating the past and present. This thesis will take the same approach by applying history but to a much narrower field of actors with a more specific focus on Greenland.

Similarly, Jørgen Taagholt and Jens Claus Hansen study the history of Greenland with a specific focus on the role of the island during the Cold War. They argue that the value and role of Greenland in security policy are primarily controlled by the relations between Russia and the US (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 67). This thesis does the same, but none of the historic events are connected and a lot has happened since the rise of China. This thesis takes its starting point in Taagholt and Hansen's outline of Greenlandic history but then pinpoints parallels between past and present events and Cold War similarities.

The Danish Institute for International Studies' report *Intensifying great power politics in the Arctic – Points for consideration by the Kingdom of Denmark* deals with the intensified competition in the Arctic with a focus on China, Russia and the US. It is very similar to this thesis, but the approach is different. The report analyses the assessments and strategies of Finland, Iceland, and Norway in order to draw on insights and experiences and then offer ideas for updates to the KoD's new Arctic strategy. This thesis differs by offering a historical dimension and a more specific understanding of the intensified competition.

Another similar take on the increased tension in the Arctic is NATO StratCom's report *Arctic Narratives and Political Values: Arctic States, China and NATO*. It focuses on how the eight Arctic states, China, and NATO narrate the Arctic region, conceptualise the region, and frame their relationship with other Arctic actors. The report is based on official statements, speeches, and policy documents published by the governments between January 2012 and June 2019 (Mackenzie Allan, 2019, p. 6). Most interesting for this thesis are the sections on China, Russia and the US. Unlike NATO StratCom's report, this thesis focuses on the specific security issues in Greenland rather than the Arctic region as a whole. Furthermore, the approach has a historical dimension,

using material from before 2012 but also covering the dramatic events around Greenland that have taken place from August 2019 till June 2020.

While much literature has covered the great power tensions in the Arctic region, it has not been possible to find any written material investigating the historical dimension of how the KoD must react to Chinese, Russian, and US interference in the coming Arctic strategy. This shows that there is a gap in the literature on how to understand the increased interference in the Arctic from the perspective of the KoD. This thesis will close the gap with a timely relevant dissertation that offers academically, historically, and policy-relevant insights. This will add to both the academic understanding and policy debate on how and why the great power interferes on Greenland and how the KoD must react to external interference in Greenland.

Road map

The thesis is split into four parts. Part I is an introduction to the thesis' overall framework, where the used method, theory, and an overview of the KoD's history are outlined. Part II aims to identify a pattern between the current events and the Cold War. From this, these events will be analysed and categorised to understand what drives the external interference in Greenland. Part III discusses how the findings in the analysis influence the KoD. Lastly, part IV offers recommendations to the KoD on how to react to the interference and provides a conclusion to the thesis.

The methodological approach and reflections

This chapter elaborates on the method and data collection technique used. It serves to show how the research question can be transformed into practical research. Furthermore, it will outline the reflection on the methodological approach and the limitations hereof.

Applied History

The research question seeks to investigate how the KoD should react to the increased Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland. Based on Emerson's argument, the thesis argues that there is a need to look at the past to see how the future will be moulded by this foreign interference (Emmerson, 2011, p. 6). This requires a method that makes a connection between the past and the present. This is why the thesis has been heavily influenced by the method Applied History, which both Thucydides and Henry Kissinger are known for. Currently, leading figures connected with the

method are political scientist Graham Allison and historian Niall Ferguson, working on the Applied History Project at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Allison and Ferguson have written a manifesto on the discipline, articulating that the method '*[attempts] to illuminate current challenges and choices by analyzing historical precedents and analogues*' (Allison & Ferguson, 2016). The method is used to make decisions based on experience because while history most likely will not repeat itself exactly, the present will unavoidably resemble it, and so will the future (Allison, 2015). Thus, the thesis takes the stand that it is possible to pinpoint factors in the past that gave rise to a specific situation, and therefore it is possible to make observations about what is likely to happen in the future.

Applied History will be used to identify analogies between current tension and the Cold War as well as great power tensions. This is to spot a pattern which can prove helpful to understanding how the KoD must react to the new tension in the coming Arctic strategy. The aim is to find out if there are similarities, which precedents are most comparable, what happened, and what can the past tell us about foreign interference in Greenland? (Allison & Ferguson, 2016). Allison and Ferguson argue that '*all we believe about the present depends on what we believe about the past*' (Allison & Ferguson, 2016). Therefore, the thesis seeks to understand the actors interference in Greenland by looking at the current situation in Greenland and interrelating it with analogies from the past (Allison, 2015).

China has not been involved in Greenland for as long as Russia and the US. But their behaviour around Greenland can possibly be explained by other patterns and experiences with Chinese involvement and great power tensions. The method can '*illuminate the consequences of actions in comparable situations*' (Allison & Ferguson, 2016). This is because the present is the accumulation of decisions and actions of the past (Crowcroft, 2018).

The author has chosen Applied History as the best approach to answering the research question. The method is sufficient to show the parallels between now and the Cold War and how it interferes in the northernmost part of the KoD. When applying history to the current interference in Greenland, it should therefore be noted that history is '*not a cookbook offering pretested recipes. It teaches by analogy, not by maxims*' (Allison & Ferguson, 2016). Therefore, the use of the method

requires both imagination and judgment, because it will not take away the burden of making difficult decisions.

Data collection

The data collection began with a review of the DDIS *Risk Assessment 2019's* chapter on the competition between China, Russia, and the US in the Arctic, and how this impacts the KoD. It looks at Chinese and Russian strategy in the Arctic and how this affects the shared ambition to keep Arctic cooperation separate from international security policy issues (DDIS, 2019, pp. 11-17). The DDIS reports are under the authority of the Ministry of Defence, so they can be seen as portraying the official Danish perception of the Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland.

To understand the current situation a broader reading on the history of the politics around Greenland was required. The historical reading often referred to specific events where problems with foreign interference in Greenland were in focus. In older literature, there were mostly references to Russia/USSR and to the US, and especially to the power play during the Cold War. Newer literature also includes China's new role in Greenland. Here, it was necessary to look at the broader history to find patterns to explain Chinese behaviour regarding Greenland, which then led to the identification of a pattern of behaviour in China's rise as a superpower. Thus it was the patterns identified in the reading and research that led to investigating the great powers' renewed interference in Greenland. This correlation between past and present events led to a historically based research process. Then, these events were mapped in a timeline to draw parallels between the historic events and identify a pattern. The process created an understanding of the interference in Greenland, which led to a broader investigation of the history of the KoD and the Danish-Greenlandic relationship to understand the intricacies and nature of the current issues influencing Greenland. This gave insight into the problems and cemented that the interference is a challenge to the KoD.

Research limitations

Greenland is currently a hot topic, which has influenced the research process. Often the most useful information is classified and due to the development of the tensions around Greenland, not all information has been fully reported yet. The documentation of the interference in Greenland builds on open sources such as archive material, official documents, books, and news articles. Open

sources were used to support the argument of the thesis because they provide competent analyses and angles that are relevant to this thesis. But this literature will not cover the whole scope and depth of the foreign interference in Greenland. All three case actors have an interest in not openly revealing their intentions regarding Greenland. This thesis works from numerous reports, articles, etc. that may have an implicit bias due to the rivalry between China, Russia, and the US. Therefore, this thesis relies on the author's critical judgment of reliable data that offers the most important and characteristic trends in relation to developments around Greenland and in the Arctic region. Furthermore, this thesis relies on the DDIS *Risk Assessment 2019*, which have access to other sources than this thesis had.

It should be noted that the author does not speak nor read either Chinese, Greenlandic, or Russian. This limitation means that there are original and relevant documents and articles, etc. that will not be included in this research, and these angles on the interference in Greenland will not be reflected. All three actors have published material on Arctic and Greenlandic matters in English, but it is imaginable that there is some important Chinese and Russian information that is only accessible in their respective native languages. Here, the objective was to look a minimum of three different sources representing different views on the Arctic and Greenlandic security issue. This has been done to minimise the possibility of questioning the validity of the project and to compensate for the information that could not be accessed.

By including three actors in this thesis, the research outcomes will be limited, broader, and less exhaustive than if the focus were only on one or two actors. However, it was found necessary to include all three to give the most authentic picture of the current situation of interference in Greenland. It is important to bear in mind that the selection of specific actors and the parallels drawn in this study are another limitation. In the selection, the aim was to avoid potential bias in applying the method and in the conclusions that were drawn. The subjectivity in the highlighted historical and present parallels is a limitation to the research because they are based on the author's judgement on what is important to Greenlandic security issues.

This thesis only focuses on the great power tension, but others might also interfere in Greenland. The collected material only represents a narrow view of the Greenlandic tensions. Due to the length

and scope of this thesis, it was not possible to include all relevant events and actors in relation to the interference in Greenland and the writing of the new Arctic strategy.

Theory

To answer the research question, the chosen theory is strategic narratives and AE. By categorising and analysing foreign interference in Greenland through strategic narratives, it is possible to reveal the underlying motivations. This combined with the theory AE can be indicative of whether the coming Arctic strategy should rely on a low-tension security environment or a more competitive behaviour similar to a Cold War 2.0.

Strategic narratives

Lawrence Freedman introduced the relatively new concept of strategic narratives to the field of international security. He argues that what makes the narratives strategic is that they are constructed deliberately '*out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current*' and that they are also '*nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others*' (Freedman, 2006, p. 22).

Based on Freedman's building blocks, Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle offer the most comprehensive theoretical framework that states how strategic narratives can explain the major dynamics in international security. They argue that strategic narratives can be defined as '*means by which political actors attempt to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors*' (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 6). The concept of strategic narratives offers a structure representing the past, the present, the future, and the desired endpoint (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 7). Thereby, strategic narratives can be seen as guidelines helping countries achieve their political goals and project their values in order to extend their influence and change the discursive environment they operate in (Antoniades, Miskimmon, & O'Loughlin, 2010, p. 3). Here, strategic narratives can offer theoretical indications of what motivates Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland. Based on this, the theory seems relevant because it provides this thesis with a framework for understanding Chinese, Russian, and US motivations more in depth, allowing the thesis to produce the most suitable recommendations for the KoD's new Arctic strategy.

Strategic narratives can be divided into three categories: system narratives, identity narratives, and issue narratives. *International System* narratives describe the structure of the international order, who the players are, and how the system works (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 8). In this thesis, the international system will be understood as the Arctic region to make the strategic narrative more specific. *Identity* narratives provide information about a political actor within the international system. It is the story of the actor, its values, and what goals it has. *Issue* narratives are about the rationale that drives particular policies. They set out why a certain action or policy is needed, and how it will be successfully accomplished or implemented (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 8). The issue narrative explains who the important actors are, what the conflict or issue is, and how this underlying issue will be solved by a particular course of action. It should be noted that the above-mentioned levels of the strategic narratives are inextricably linked with each other. If they are self-contradictory, the effectiveness of the strategic narratives will possibly be undermined (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 8).

The use of strategic narratives can be criticised because it can be questioned whether the actors are even aware of their strategic narratives. Therefore, strategic narratives might just be a story that the author attaches to the case actors, making it unclear if these narratives matter at all. Mostly, it is a matter of preference. For example, the theory of Grand Strategy deals with some of the same questions that '*refer* to the collection of plans and policies that comprise the state's deliberate effort to harness political, military, diplomatic, and economic tools together to advance that state's national interest' (Feaver, 2009). Here, it can also be asked whether an author simply imputes a grand strategy to an actor who is not aware of this plan. Indeed, this is possible, but the theories are useful frameworks under the discipline of international security for understanding interests and motivations more in depth. However, the use of grand strategies with regard to Greenland most likely would not generate another outcome for the recommendations. The theory of strategic narratives is a more concrete framework for understanding the promotion of the actor's interests and ambitions on several levels (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017). With this in mind, it was decided that strategic narratives can be used to understand which motivations drive the interference and, based on this, how the respective actors will behave in the future (Roselle, 2010, p. 7). The use of strategic narratives in this thesis contributes to the academic and policy debate about how the KoD should react to external interference in sovereign affairs in Greenland.

Arctic Exceptionalism

The KoD's current Arctic strategy frames the Arctic region as what Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987 defined as a 'zone of peace and cooperation' in his Murmansk speech as part of the gradual process of the 'desecuritisation' of the Arctic region at the end of the Cold War (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 6; Gorbachev, 1987). Since then the Arctic region has been considered an 'exceptional' region of 'low tension'. At the end of the Cold War, the great power rivalry in the Arctic came to an end, and therefore the region was not as geostrategically or geopolitically important anymore (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 6). The practical, depoliticised cooperation was seen as unique because two of the Arctic states, Russia and the US, had been adversaries for nearly half a century, both in the Cold War and in several proxy wars that took place outside their territory. But the Arctic region is an exception because of the desecuritisation that took place due to cooperation between former adversaries (Hoogensen Gjørsv & Hodgson, 2019, p. 2). The meta-narrative 'territory of dialogue' emerged around the Arctic, creating the basis for the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008 and was reaffirmed by the AC in 2019 by stating a wish '*to maintain peace, stability and constructive cooperation in the Arctic*' (Rovaniemi Statement by the Chair of 2019; The Ilulissat Declaration, 2008).

Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg connect AE to desecuritisation as a governance strategy. Originally formulated by the Copenhagen School, desecuritisation is the opposite process to securitisation and attempts to '*prevent a policy issue from being securitized or attempts to move issues from the realm of security and back to normal politic*' (Jacobsen & Strandsbjerg, 2017, p. 15). Thereby, this thesis will take the approach that '*when a securitizing actor uses the rhetoric of an existential threat and thereby takes an issue out of what under those conditions is "normal politics", we have a case of securitization*' (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 3). In relation to AE, securitisation will then be the opposite of this idea.

Käpylä and Mikkola argue that there are four assumptions regarding why the Arctic region has been seen as exceptional (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, pp. 8-10):

1. *There is not that much to fight over in the Arctic region.*
2. *The Arctic area has governance structures that foster co-operation and defuse potential conflict dynamics.*
3. *Arctic states have explicitly expressed their interest in international cooperation.*

4. *Arctic states have little to gain from conflict dynamics that would create an unfruitful investment and development environment.*

But Käpylä and Mikkola also offer a critique of this theory. They argue that the AE is no longer dominant because it is insufficient for understanding the Arctic security environment today (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 4). In other words, AE is coming to an end, and the Arctic system is increasingly intertwined with global politics. This critique of AE in connection with securitisation will be the foundation for discussing how foreign interference in the KoD breaks with the idea of AE.

Triangulation of the method and theories

By triangulating Applied History and strategic narratives in the analysis, the understanding of the different dimensions of the research question is deepened. Alone, neither of the approaches would be able to answer the overall research question specifically enough. Both the method of Applied History and the theory of strategic narratives are forward-looking concepts but cannot produce the same findings.

The point of the triangulation is to illustrate the foreign interference from two different perspectives and thereby to crosscheck and validate the new knowledge from different angles (Kennedy, 2009). Applied History is particularly good at making an interrelation between past and present to predict possible patterns of foreign interference. Then, strategic narratives adds an extra dimension of what motivated the case actors to follow this pattern in their behaviour regarding Greenland. Operating from both platforms compensates for the method's lack of interpretation of where the interference originates from and the theory's lack of analysis of patterns of behaviour and its predictions on future developments. This combination gives a fuller picture of the interference in Greenland, a less biased analysis, and more weight to the findings. The result will be more likely to be deemed trustworthy as well as useful to implement in the KoD's future Arctic strategy.

Furthermore, the thesis deploys the theory of AE as a measurement of how the foreign interference in Greenland should be reacted to. Here, there is a risk that a thesis based on several theories will point at several directions, which can make it difficult to come to a clear conclusion. However, it

was decided that the method and theories are not contradictory to each other, which allows them to be combined.

The Danish-Greenlandic relationship

Now that the general scope, method, and theory have been outlined, the thesis' attention turns to the subject of the thesis. Before delving into the analysis, important background history and facts will be presented to help understand the impact of foreign interference on the Danish-Greenlandic relationship.

A complex relationship

Greenland is the biggest island in the world, with only 56,000 inhabitants, located close to the North American continent with its southern part roughly in the middle of the direct flight route from the US to Western Europe. The northern part of Greenland is similarly in the middle of the flight route from the US to Russia (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 12). The Greenlandic relation to Denmark is a result of the Treaty of Kiel in 1814. Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden as part of the peace agreement. But the original Norwegian dependencies of Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Iceland were not covered by the treaty, and they remained part of the Danish Kingdom (Treaty of Kiel, 1814).

But already in 1721 a lasting connection between Greenland and Denmark was established through the missionary Hans Egede. He traveled to Greenland, supported by King Frederik IV. With Hans Egede, the colonisation of Greenland started under Danish administration. In the period 1728-1731 a Danish military unit was stationed in Greenland. Then a new period of Danish influence started with Hans Egede's christening, baptising, and colonisation of Greenland (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 15; Sørensen A. K., 2019). In the following years, Denmark's main aim was to secure Danish sovereignty over Greenland.

Greenland has come within the sphere of influence of other nations several times. In 1931, Norway tried to claim an uninhabited piece of land in the north-eastern part of Greenland. The Danish ownership of Greenland remained unclear for two years until the International Court of Justice in Haag decided that the whole of Greenland should be considered Danish (Breum, 2018, p. 122). A few years later while Denmark got occupied by Germany in 1940, Greenland was under threat of seizure by the United Kingdom and Canada (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 18).

During the occupation, the Danish Ambassador Henrik Kaufmann in the US decided that he, and not the Danish government, represented Danish interests in North America. In April 1941, Kaufmann, against the instructions of the Danish government, signed *The Agreement Relating to the Defence of Greenland* with the US, allowing the presence of US troops and made Greenland a US protectorate, which led to the establishment of US airbases and military bases in Greenland (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 19; Sørensen A. K., 2019; Defence of Greenland, 1941). Kaufmann's agreement ensured that Greenland remained under Danish rule even while Denmark was occupied.

In 1951, a new defence agreement replaced Kaufmann's, which gave the US far-reaching jurisdiction over their military activities and defence areas within Greenland and permission to fly over Greenlandic territory under Articles 2 and 3 (Defence Agreement Between the United States and the Kingdom of Denmark, 1951). It gave the US de facto shared sovereignty over Greenland. In return, the US should respect and leave Denmark with the Danish regulations involving the Greenlandic population and the internal Greenlandic administration. The Greenlandic population were not involved in the negotiations (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 24). By giving the US quite free hands in Greenland, Denmark ensured that they was seen as a good ally (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 32). This new cooperation gave Denmark a Greenland Card to play in different relations with the US. In 1991, the US' rights were reduced so that the Thule Air Base was the only US base in Greenland and Greenlandic influence was secured on future US military presence (Agreement to Amend and Supplement the 1951 Agreement on the Defence of Greenland, 2004; MoU, 1991).

In 1957, the Danish Prime Minister H.C. Hansen received a request from the US Ambassador in Denmark. He wanted to know whether or not the government should be informed if the US placed nuclear weapons on Greenland (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 31). In 1995, a highly classified letter from H.C. Hansen was found. The letter shows that there was an unspoken agreement between Denmark and the US allowing the storage of nuclear weapons on the Thule Air Base (Hansen, 1957). The release of the letter created a big fuss in Danish politics because it broke with the Danish nuclear weapon policy and again Greenland was not informed (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 31).

From colony to self-governance

With the adoption of the Danish Constitution in 1953, Greenland was no longer a Danish colony but had legal status as an integral part of Denmark. Greenlanders were granted voting rights and two seats in the Danish parliament (Ministry of the State of Denmark). In 1979, Greenland attained Home Rule and was no longer a Danish country but pursuant to the Home Rule Law, a distinct community within the KoD (Sørensen A. K., 2019). In 2009, Greenland attained self-governance and now is allowed to take a decision in favour of independence and secede if there is a majority vote (Ministry of the State of Denmark). This also meant a number of new areas of responsibility. Nevertheless, the far-reaching autonomy did not involve control over foreign affairs, defence, security, and immigration, and Denmark retains control over these areas (Ministry of the State of Denmark).

The turbulent history, unequal balance of power, and political disagreements still affect today's relationship between Denmark and Greenland. When Aleqa Hammond was the Greenlandic Premier from 2013-2014, the independence rhetoric became very present. This was the case when she boycotted a ministerial meeting in Kiruna where US Secretary of State John Kerry participated because Greenland was dissatisfied with not having its own seat in the AC (Nunatsaiq News, 2013). To the members of the AC, the KoD seemed to not have control over its internal politics. In the end, Greenland got their own voting seat at the table (Breum, 2015, p. 193).

Greenland has one overarching wish: independence. Greenland now has an Independence Minister, and a Greenlandic Constitution Commission was established in 2017 (Breum, 2018, p. 69). But the main obstacle preventing Greenland from becoming independent is money. Greenland still relies on the annual block grant from Denmark, which was 3.9 billions Danish Kroner (DKK) in 2020 or 55% of the total Greenlandic government income (Ministry of Finance, 2020). On the other hand, Denmark is marching in another direction by calling itself a 'major Arctic power' (Breum, 2018, p. 57). This status can only be upheld by keeping Greenland in the realm. Denmark still has tremendous power over Greenland, but Greenland is also very important to Denmark's power in international relations. This means that Denmark will go to great lengths to keep Greenland in the realm. Having Greenland in the KoD has given Denmark a seat in the AC together with China, Russia, and the US. Thereby, Denmark has access to the great powers through Greenland.

This complex relationship is not made easier by the great powers' interferences in Greenland. It puts the KoD in a dilemma, where money from a foreign great power could free Greenland from the block grant and help it on its way to independence. It would also mean the end of Denmark as an Arctic nation. This ambiguity poses dilemmas and difficulties regarding how to act politically regarding Greenland, but it also shows there are many possibilities for Greenland in the future. This is an important aspect that needs to be taken into account in this thesis regarding how the interference will be perceived internally in the KoD by the Danish and Greenlandic governments.

The next natural step for Greenland is independence. In 2016, Greenland appointed a Minister of Independence, which is a sign that Greenland is irrevocably heading toward independence. Currently, the Greenlandic constitution is being written. A draft will be handed in on the national day, the 21st of June 2021 (Kristiansen, 2019).

Part II: What motivates foreign interference in Greenland?

This chapter provides a three-fold analysis that investigates foreign interference in Greenland. First, it briefly outlines how interference has increased in the Arctic in general. Then the thesis applies history to the current tensions in order to argue that the identified parallels are similar to the pattern of Cold War 2.0 and thus understand future foreign interference. These findings will be analysed and categorised using strategic narratives as a tool to understand what motivates interference in Greenland.

Tensions in the Arctic region

China, Russia, and the US have all turned their focus to the Arctic and Greenland, which increasingly looks like a well-known pattern from the Cold War. Despite the shared idea of AE, US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo called the Arctic '*an arena of global power and competition*' at an AC meeting in 2019 (Pompeo, 2019). The AC's main goal is '*to enhance cooperation on environmental protection and sustainable economic development in the region*'. Therefore, security and defence issues are usually not discussed in the AC (Groenning, 2016; Viggo Jakobsen, 2019). But now US Secretary of State Pompeo has, indicating a changed security environment in the Arctic.

Due to global warming the Arctic region is becoming more and more accessible. This has heightened awareness of the region because of the increased possibilities of acquiring oil, gas, and minerals. But also, new sea routes through the Arctic could curb the expenses and CO2 emissions incurred when shipping goods from one part of the world to another. It is estimated that the Arctic holds close to 30% of the world's undiscovered gas reserves and approximately 10% of the world's undiscovered oil reserves (Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020). Likewise, it is estimated that the ships on route between East Asia and Northwest Europe could save more than 40% of the distance and fuel costs by sailing the Northern Sea Route (NSR) north of Russia and Siberia rather than through the Suez Canal (Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020). This means renewed economic and strategic interference in Greenland.

In 2007, Russia planted a titanium flag on the seaside below the North Pole to make a claim on the territory, which added fuel to the great power tensions in the Arctic region and the North Pole was a little less a 'pole of peace' than Gorbachev stated it to be in 1987 (Emmerson, 2011, p. 95; Gorbachev, 1987). This caught the KoD's attention, and led to the initiative of the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008 between the five Arctic Coastal States² on '*solving territorial disputes through international law and by peaceful means and to strengthen practical cooperation on navigation, search and rescue, environmental monitoring and disaster response and scientific cooperation*' (Ilulissat Declaration, 2008). It was meant as a pre-emptive act of desecuritisation to halt the growing tensions and promote cooperation between the five states (Ilulissat Declaration, 2008). The initiative was exceptional due to the increased tensions between the West and Russia in other parts of the world (DDIS, 2019, p. 11). Then along with the Russia annexation of territory in Ukraine in 2014, the relationship between NATO and Russia worsened, leading to increased mistrust like in the Cold War (Breum, 2015, p. 223; Konyshchev, Sergunin, & Subbotin, 2017).

Now, both NATO and Russia have increased their military exercises in the Arctic. In 2019, Russia held the large-scale military exercise Tsentr with almost 130,000 personnel, including Chinese forces. Part of the exercise was held in the Russian part of the Arctic (Staalesen, 2019). Also, in 2018, Russia held its biggest military exercise since the Cold War with 300,000 attending from Russia and China. The drill was justified by NATO's 'aggressive and unfriendly' attitudes towards Russia (BBC, 2018). On the opposite side, the US and NATO held large-scale exercises too. In

² The five Arctic coastal states are Canada, Norway, Russia, the US and the KoD.

March 2020, more than 15,000 personnel from ten allied nations were meant to participate in the biennial winter exercise Cold Response. The purpose of the exercise is to ‘*secure NATO’s ability to conduct multi-national joint operations in demanding winter conditions*’ but it was cancelled due to the coronavirus (Norwegian Armed Forces). It could seem that NATO was practicing for a freezing Cold War 2.0.

Further, the US Navy’s Second Fleet was reactivated in 2018. Now it is fully operational in response to increased Russian activity in the Arctic region (DDIS, 2019; High North News, 2020). The US has secured funding for one new icebreaker operating in the Arctic region, which will be the first new US icebreaker in forty years. It will be a supplement to the only operating icebreaker *Polar Star*. The US Coast Guard has already requested funding for a second one (Uljua, 2020). At the beginning of May 2020, the US sent four military warships into the Barents Sea, which is in between Greenland and Russia, for the first time since the 1980s (Elmer, 2020).

Another indication of a Cold War pattern is the Russian military build-up in the Arctic and the reactivation of the Russian Northern Fleet, which had been left abandoned since the economic collapse of an exhausted USSR (Huebert, 2019; Aliyev, 2019). At the end of the 2000s, Russia returned to the Arctic region and has been building new military bases, expanding old ones, and reopening several Cold War bases, long before the Ukraine Crisis (Aliyev, 2019). One of these bases is the northernmost Russian Air base Nagurskoye, from which it is possible to hit the US Thule Air Base in Greenland with short notice by using long-range missiles (DDIS, 2019, p. 14). This resumption of missiles pointing over the Arctic is also known from the Cold War. According to Vladimir Barbin, Russian Ambassador to the KoD, the Russian presence at the remote Nagurskoye base is meant for defensive purposes because of the increased US military presence in the Arctic region (Krog, 2019).

Additionally, Russian President Vladimir Putin approved an ambitious 15-year development master plan for the Russian Arctic in March 2020. It covers the reconstruction of former Soviet infrastructure, new airports, icebreakers, and the further development of the NSR to make it a global transport route (Staalesen, 2019; Tastum, 2020).

The above-mentioned are some of the indications of a renewed security policy positioning between Russia and the US in the Arctic region. Even though they both affirmed the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008, this is now being challenged by renewed interest in the Arctic (DDIS, 2019). Now, China has joined the struggle for more influence in the Arctic. China is one of the non-Arctic states with a growing interest in the region and is a relatively new player. But during the last couple of years, the Arctic interest has been put at the top of the political agenda in China and is mainly focused on infrastructure, natural resources, and influencing Arctic affairs (DDIS, 2019, p. 12). China has built icebreakers, including working on a nuclear-powered submarine, to conduct inspections in polar areas (Humpert, 2019; Malik, 2019). In the summer of 2017, China carried out eight research expeditions to the Arctic, where the icebreaker Xuelong anchored for the first time outside Nuuk (Sørensen C., 2018, p. 3). This new development involves possible cooperation between civil Chinese actors and the Chinese military in Greenland. From a Danish perspective, there is a fear that the Chinese scientific research will be used for dual purposes by the Chinese navy, the world's second most powerful naval force (DDIS, 2019, p. 17; Brady, 2019). From a nuclear perspective, the Arctic, as the Chinese northern flank, is a vulnerability. This is due to the flight route of the US and Russian long-range ballistic missiles, directed at China, transit the Arctic region. Here, the Chinese motivation could be to restore China's nuclear deterrence capability by the deployment of submarine-based ballistic missiles to the Arctic (DDIS, 2019, p. 17; Brady, 2019).

While China is thousands of kilometres from Nuuk, the interest is very present and was documented in 2017 in the *'Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative'*, where the NSR was included in the Chinese BRI on the improvement of global connectivity (Xinhua, 2017). In the document the specific Chinese interest in the Arctic in the form of a 'Polar Silk Road' was linked to the overall and strategic interests of China. This led to China declaring itself a 'near-Arctic state' in January 2018 (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2018). This indicates enormous Arctic ambitions and the capital to realise them. In the five-page long document, China underlined their respect for the current power structure in the Arctic, the sovereignty of the Arctic states, and the AC, in which China gained observed status in 2013 supported by Denmark (Milne, 2013). In the perspective of the US, there is no room for China's label as a 'near-Arctic state', which US Secretary of State Pompeo made very clear by saying that *'There are only Arctic States*

and Non-Arctic States. No third category exists and claiming otherwise entitles China to exactly nothing' (Pompeo, 2019). This set the tone for a new competition in the Arctic region.

Reemergence of Greenland as strategically important

In this section, history will be applied to identify foreign interference in Greenland in order to outline a pattern of behaviour, as this is not the first time that Greenland has been high on the geopolitical agenda. Interference in Greenland is repeating itself, following the rediscovery of Greenland as a strategically important location. Before WW2, Greenland did not have any significant strategic importance. But during WW2, Greenland was used by the US as a steppingstone to Europe (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, pp. 16-17). Concurrently with the tensions between the US and the USSR becoming more critical after the end of WW2, Greenland got trapped between the two superpowers because of the geostrategic importance of the island. During the Cold War, the route across Greenland was the shortest route for attacks with nuclear missiles (Emmerson, 2011, p. 130). Therefore, Greenland became essential to the defence of the US homeland and territory. The Thule Air Base was built in 1952 by the US and was used as an observation post to discover and possibly to monitor a potential USSR attack on the US (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 25). But when the Cold War ebbed out in the 1990s, the strategic importance of Greenland decreased, and so did foreign interference in Greenland.

In Greenland, it is Danish Defence that monitors and enforces tasks at sea, in air and on land through the SIRIUS Patrol. The primary tasks are the defence in and around Greenland, maritime surveillance, and the enforcement of sovereignty (Ministry of Defence, 2019). Danish Defence only has a few units on the huge island and their presence is sporadic. In a report by the Danish Ministry of Defence, it was stated that it is difficult for the Danish Joint Arctic Command to detect foreign activity on Greenland territory or close by (Ministry of Defence, 2016). Greenland lies in the so-called Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap. During the Cold War it was one of the more critical strategic maritime transit routes. With the increased tension between Russia and the West today, the GIUK Gap has regained its importance due to its function as a chokepoint for Russia's access to the North Atlantic Ocean. This means that Denmark, the US, and NATO are now focusing on military presence in the GIUK Gap again (DDIS, 2019, p. 14). In 2016, the Danish Ministry of Defence's Arctic analysis showed that Danish Defence would not have a chance of spotting the increased use of Russian submarines in the GIUK Gap (Ministry of Defence, 2016).

Therefore, it was decided to equip Danish helicopters with sonar systems and the frigates as well as support ships with equipment to combat submarines (Ministry of Defence, 2018). Greenland has once again been turned into a battlefield for the giants. A lot has changed since the Cold War but the geopolitical and strategic importance of Greenland has not. The question is whether the re-emergence of Greenland's importance means the revival of the Cold War.

The US' wish for expanding influence

In August 2019, President Donald Trump wanted to buy Greenland. An area corresponding to 98% of the KoD territory, which would move the US' defence line thousands of kilometres to the east (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2019). The Danish Prime Minister (PM) Mette Frederiksen rejected the offer, calling it absurd. Her Greenlandic counterpart PM Kim Kielsen said that Greenland was not for sale but open for business. To many the offer seemed to be a joke, but it should be taken seriously because it indicates the renewed strategic importance Greenland has for the US. Holding Greenland would provide added US leverage in the increased competition with China and Russia in the Arctic region (Goddard, 2019). In the wake of the offer, PM Frederiksen announced at the NATO summit in 2019 a plan worth billions DKK to hunt Russian submarines and aerial reconnaissance of Greenland (McGhie, 2019).

The US' interference in Greenland can be spotted several times before in history, which indicates a continuous US attention towards the island. At the beginning of 1867, the US had no territory in the Arctic region. Later that year, the first bid on Greenland was made (Emmerson, 2011, p. 74). The then-Secretary of State William Seward tried to expand the US' sphere of influence via the creation of a new empire and wanted to buy Greenland, Iceland, and the Danish West Indies. But the negotiation with Denmark reached a deadlock. Instead, the US bought Alaska from Russia (Emmerson, 2011, p. 76). Ownership of Greenland would give the US influence over the North Atlantic Ocean in the same way as the purchase of Alaska gave them influence over the Pacific Ocean (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 15). The US has expanded several times to reach its current size, such as via the purchase of Louisiana in 1803. This expansion was based on The Monroe Doctrine formulated in 1823 by President James Monroe, where the US reserved the right to strive for hegemony on the American continents (Monroe Doctrine, 1823). It was a strategy to remove European powers from the Western hemisphere. For Denmark, this meant the selling off of the Danish West Indies in 1917. At around the same time, the US accepted Danish sovereignty over

Greenland and stated that they would *'not object to the Danish Government extending their political and economic interests to the whole of Greenland'* (Convention Between the United States and Denmark for the Cession of the Danish West Indies, 1916).

In 1920, the US again underlined the strategic importance of Greenland and declared that it would only accept that either Denmark or the US was in charge of the island. No third-party power's purchase rights would be recognised (The Secretary of State, 1920). This strategic importance was restated in Kaufmann's Defence agreement from 1941. Here it was stated that the US *'explicitly recognizing the Danish sovereignty over Greenland'*, granted *'to the United States the right to locate and construct airplane landing fields and facilities for the defense of Greenland and for the defense of the American Continent'* (Defence of Greenland, 1941).

A new offer came in the aftermath of WW2. In 1946, President Harry Truman failed to buy Greenland (Emmerson, 2011, p. 306). But with the Cold War tensions, the US got what they wanted regarding Greenland and were allowed to keep the military installations in Greenland that were developed during WW2. When the US demanded additional bases, Denmark accepted. One of the results was the Thule Air Base (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 25). The three offers at Greenland show a precedent for and pattern of the US officials trying to buy Greenlandic territory.

With its wish to buy Greenland still unresolved, the US has tried to expand its influence in other ways. In 2019, the US expressed a wish to re-establish a permanent diplomatic presence in Greenland, which was welcomed by the KoD (Turnowsky, 2019). Last time the US opened a consulate in Nuuk it was as a response to Nazi Germany, which had already invaded Denmark, when the US feared an invasion of Greenland, which would also have been a threat to the US due to Greenland's location (Mascaro, 2019). It closed again in 1953. The Nazis are no longer a threat to Greenland, but the wish for a consulate in Greenland has reemerged. Based on why the US opened the consulate during WW2, the reestablishment of diplomatic presence in Greenland today is very likely due to growing US concerns that it will lose political and economic influence in Greenland, especially to China. The worst-case scenario for the US would be to be forced out of Greenland and the Thule Air Base, which would mean leaving a gaping hole in the US' missile defence.

This idea of protecting the US is supported by the statement that the consulate would be *'a critical component of our efforts to increase U.S. presence in the Arctic and would serve as an effective platform to advance U.S. interests in Greenland'* (Mascaro, 2019). The same concerns were displayed in the *'Statement of Intent on Defense Investments in Greenland'* from 2018 between the US and the KoD which *'lays out the principles for investment in Greenland to enhance U.S. military operational flexibility and situational awareness in order to address the changing security environment in the Arctic'* (see Appendix 1). The renewed presence in Nuuk will allow the US to *'protect essential equities in Greenland while developing deeper relationships with Greenlandic officials and society'* (O'Grady, 2019). Here, the US are securitising Greenland, which differs from AE. If the US needs to protect 'essential entities', it means there is someone it needs to protect these entities from. This is very likely to be China and Russia. The US has entered into the Ilulissat Declaration with Russia on Arctic cooperation, so there should not be a need for extra protection, if the Arctic is still exceptional. But with China there is no agreement according to the governance of the Arctic, so this could be a threat to the AE. Additionally, the new consulate will be in the same building as the Danish Joint Arctic Command. It is very likely to be a coincidence, but it could also be a way of getting more influence over the defence of Greenland, which could be interpreted as an intensification of the current tensions (Krog, 2020).

In April 2020, the US again pushed for more influence with an 83 million DKK aid package for Greenland (Breum, 2020). A senior US state department official said the money was not *'designed to pave the way to purchase Greenland'* but to *'benefit the economic development of Greenland, including the mineral industry, tourism and education'* (BBC, 2020). There have been several reactions to this helping hand. The Greenlandic PM Kim Nielsen said that *'This good news confirms that our work on building a constructive relationship with the United States is fruitful'*. But in Denmark, some reactions have been sharper. Karsten Hønge of the Socialist People's Party said that the US has crossed a line: *'It is completely unheard of that a close ally tries to create division between Greenland and Denmark this way'* (BBC, 2020). Also, Rasmus Jarlov, a Conservative party MP, called it *'completely unacceptable'* on Twitter (Jarlov, 2020).

The US Ambassador to the KoD, Carla Sands, stated that the reason for the aid package was a wish to be the KoD's *'partner of choice in the Arctic'* and to stop *'evil-minded influence'* on Greenland. The aid package was a response to *'Russia's pattern of aggressive behavior and increasing*

militarization in the Arctic’ and the fact that China *‘is trying to insinuate itself into the region because it sees the Arctic as another place to advance its predatory economic interests and project its authoritarian values’* (Sands, 2020). The US Ambassador set the tone for the US’ resentment of its the two competitors in the Arctic region, but she also sketched the characteristics of the Cold War, but this time with a two-stream conflict. First, Russian military build-up is similar to the Cold War. Second, the Chinese expansion of its economic interests can be viewed as similar to the USSR spreading its values. Last-mentioned is part of the ongoing China-US trade war where tariffs on billions of dollars are imposed on the other’s goods. In January, the two parties signed a deal to ease the trade battle (BBC, 2020). Both streams highlight the Cold War tensions due to the renewed positioning in the Arctic and again the US seeks to stop its enemies by pursuing a policy of containment to prevent the spread of a different ideology (Sempa, 2019).

The verbal slaps did not go unnoticed. The Chinese Ambassador to the KoD, Feng Tie, called them *‘absurdities’* and accused the US Ambassador of launching *‘unprovoked attacks on China’* (Elmer, 2020). This highlights the increasing tensions between China and the US. Further, the Russian Ambassador to the KoD, Vladimir Barbin accused, the US of threatening the stability in the Arctic region and said that this aid package accompanied by harsh words violated the Ilulissat Declaration of 2008 that put an emphasis on low tensions and AE (Kjeldtoft, 2020). From a Russian perspective, the US has framed the Arctic region and especially Greenland within confrontational policy. To this Barbin said, *‘Now, the United States instead of dialogue and cooperation relies exclusively on the policy of confrontation in the region, hoping thereby to achieve dominance in this part of the world’*. It has been the harshest Russian counterattack on the new US approach in the Arctic, and it challenges the KoD’s current strategy for the Arctic region based on AE (Kjeldtoft, 2020). The military positioning in the Arctic between the US and Russia is well-known from the Cold War. Likewise, the new Chinese world order’s challenges to the US’ global dominance may look like the ideological confrontations of the USSR.

From applying history, it can be seen that Greenland has regained its importance due to great power tensions. Each time the US interferes in Greenland, it is somehow connected to protecting the US homeland, and the last two times it has been in relation to great power tensions in the Arctic region. Furthermore, it has become clear that the US will only accept that either the US or the KoD is in control of Greenland. From historical experiences and identified patterns, it shows that the US will

keep striving for more control in Greenland as long as there is a threat from Russia and China or a fear of losing influence in Greenland. If the tensions get worse, US interference will increase and vice versa. Therefore, it should be expected that the US will always be involved in Greenland due to the location of the island. The amount of interference has also been seen to vary in accordance with great power tensions.

Russian active measures

Russia holds more than twenty thousand kilometres of coast in the Arctic and has territorial sovereignty over more than 53% of the whole Arctic with two million Russians living in the region, making up more than half of the Arctic population (Tastum, 2020) Thus, Russia is historically and geographically connected to the region like no other state (Allan, 2018). This position makes Russia an important Arctic neighbour to Greenland, which the KoD needs to contend with when handling complex issues related to the Arctic, especially increased problems on climate change and now also security issues (Runge Olesen & Sørensen, 2019, p. 5).

According to the Russian Arctic strategy, national interests are first concerned with the exploitation of natural resources to provide a much needed solution to Russian economic and social development, second with having the NSR acknowledged as a national transport route, and third with contributing to an peaceful Arctic (Russian Federation's Policy for the Arctic, 2008). At a conference in St. Petersburg in 2019 President Putin said that the Russian Arctic accounts for more than 10% of all investments in the Russian Federation (Presidential Executive Office, 2019). This could motivate Russia to reconsolidate its role and military position in the Arctic region due to vital security and economic interests (DDIS, 2019, p. 13).

US's bid on Greenland and the cancelled state visit got a lot of media attention in Russia. Some focused on US militaristic intentions to annex Greenland so the US could attack Russia (Vesti News, 2019). Similarly, spokesperson Maria Zakharova on behalf of the Russian Foreign Ministry communicated Russia's surprise that Denmark had officially emphasised the importance of the Greenlandic people's self-determination in the issue of selling their land. It was questioned why the same principle did not apply regarding Crimea in 2014 (TASS, 2019).

But the main focus was on the potential conflict and division between Denmark and the US as well as internally in the KoD. On the 5th November 2019, a letter from the Greenlandic Foreign Minister (FM) Ane Lone Bagger to the Arkansas Senator Tom Cotton, a supporter of President Trump's offer on Greenland, was published and circulated on the social media Reddit and Indybay with the heading '*Greenland. How Much Does a Deal with the Devil Cost?*' (Sonmez, 2019; Bergquist, 2019). The letter was printed on the Greenlandic self-rule authority's letterhead with a case file number and signed by the FM (see Appendix 2). In the letter, the FM asks the Senator for money to fund a soon-to-be-held referendum on Greenlandic independence, and it also requests that the enquiry be addressed 'at the highest level', which could mean President Trump (Coleman & Welin, 2019). The letter was published only a few days before the Greenlandic FM and the Danish FM Jeppe Kofod visited Washington for a meeting with US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo. But it was soon discovered that the letter was a forgery by an unknown author.

According to several experts quoted in the Danish newspaper *Politiken*, Russia allegedly fabricated and spread the forgery (Svendsen & Larsen, 2019). Although Russia officially stated that the *Politiken* article was anti-Russia fake news (Russian Foreign Ministry, 2019), DDIS stated that it is very likely that Russia would use media campaigns, hereunder fake news and propaganda, to both legitimise Russian behaviour in the Arctic and to point at NATO and the US as aggressive actors (DDIS, 2019, p. 14). The use of disinformation makes it possible for Russia to influence the internal relationship between the US and the KoD. By doing this, Russia can conduct an invisible hybrid war against the West without the deployment of troops and perhaps have a say in internal matters that they would not have had without these tactics (Chivvis, 2017).

In Russia's Foreign Policy Concept of 2013, it is officially stated that Russia must '*create instruments for influencing how it is perceived in the world*', '*develop its effective means of information influence on public opinion abroad*', and '*counteract information threats to its sovereignty and security*' (Russian Foreign Ministry, 2013). In recent years, this has been visible in the use of information warfare to malign and cause disputes in the Western world (Keating & Kaczmarska, 2018). This was also seen in the 2016 US election where Russia has been accused of taking active measures to help bring about the election of President Trump by hacking the Hillary Clinton campaign, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and the Democratic National Committee (CNN, 2020). Now, intelligence officials have warned about Russia interfering

in the 2020 campaign with the aim of getting President Trump re-elected (Goldman, Barnes, Haberman, & Fandos, 2020).

In order to understand this pattern of Russian active measures and the art of political warfare, it is important to understand the background by applying history. Russia's use of active measures is far from new. Russia has a long history of actively influencing in foreign politics as a tool to further its position, which can be traced back to the USSR. These active measures includes manipulation, forgery, disinformation etc. (United States Department of State, 1981). In 2014 the extraordinary Mitrokhin Archive was made publicly available, containing secret records obtained by the former KGB-archivist Vasili Nikitich Mitrokhin (Mitrokhin Archive). The archive shows that during the Cold War the KGB did not only gather intelligence; active measures were also used to *'influence the course of world events in favor of the USSR, while discrediting and undermining the influence of the US, termed the "Main Adversary"'* and active measures were described as the *'heart and soul of Soviet intelligence'* (Calder, 2016). It seems that according to applied history, the active measures still have the same function today. Instead of seeking a military confrontation, Russia has shown a pattern of exploiting political weaknesses in the West to benefit Russia.

From applying history, it can be argued that the forged letter should be understood in the context of Russian use of active measures. For Russia, the global information sphere is an international battlefield. Here, influence campaigns have become an important tool to influence and stimulate political developments in specific directions to cause internal tensions in the Western world (DDIS, 2019, p. 24). Therefore, the KoD should expect more use of Russian active measures in their interference in Greenland. It will very likely happen at around the same time as increased US interference in Greenland.

Questionable Chinese investments

The Greenlandic coastal regions are opening up to potential mining projects due to climate change, which has caught the Chinese government's interest. The Chinese interference in Greenlandic affairs is intended to increase cooperation in science, prospect minerals, and build infrastructure to support the BRI's main goal of global connectivity (DDIS, 2019, p. 17) Here, Greenland is very interesting because it lacks the money to build new infrastructure and is rich in natural resources. China wants Greenland to be part of the BRI and China also needs to secure the state's future need of natural resources because they can no longer be self-sufficient (Volpe, 2020). Furthermore,

China has expressed a wish to build a research station in Greenland as well as a satellite ground station (Lino, 2020). This kind of research could be used to legitimise and strengthen the Chinese presence and influence in Greenlandic – and Arctic – affairs.

China has recently established direct relations to the Greenlandic government. In 2016 a Memorandum of Understanding was established between the Chinese State Oceanic Administration and the Greenlandic Department for Education, Culture, Research and Church to increase research networks and exchange between China and Greenland (MoU, 2016). Another noteworthy sign of the bilateral interest was when the Greenlandic PM Kim Nielsen paid a six-day visit to China in 2017 to strengthen the cooperation between China and Greenland (Denmark in China, 2017). Here, the delegation had a meeting with the Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM) (Matzen & Daly, 2018). In 2018, the former Greenlandic Minister for Independence, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture Suka K. Frederiksen visited the Chinese Ambassador, where the focus was on local exchanges. But Arctic affairs were also discussed (Chinese Embassy in Denmark, 2018). The latter seems to be far from a local matter. Furthermore, Greenland is considering opening a diplomatic office in Asia, perhaps in China, which would indicate that the Chinese-Greenlandic interest is mutual (Breum, 2020; McGwin, 2020).

In 2016, the Chinese mining company General Nice Group showed interest in buying the defunct naval station Grønnedal in Southern Greenland, which was up for sale. Until 2014, it had been the headquarters of the Danish Joint Arctic Command. Suddenly, the station was not for sale anymore. The Danish Government had quickly voted on the reopening of Grønnedal at minimum maintenance with the purpose of storing fuel and equipment and for educational purposes (Ministry of Defence, 2016). A very similar scenario played out in 2018, when the government-owned China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) showed interest in the construction of two new international airports in Greenland, amounting to 3.6 billion DKK. Greenland said it could finance 2.1 billion DKK but would need external funding for the remaining 1.5 billion DKK (Matzen & Daly, 2018). The Chinese attempt to provide funding was effectively blocked by Denmark. Instead, Denmark offered 700 million to co-finance the airports (Reuters, 2018).

The decision to not let China invest in Greenland is probably closely related to the US and Danish concerns over Chinese presence in Greenland. It was reported that the US was informed about the

Chinese bid on the Greenlandic airports, and they then contacted the Danish government to prevent China from getting a foothold close to the US homeland. To this the then-Danish PM Lars Løkke Rasmussen responded that *'The current airport project can have foreign and security policy perspectives that range beyond Greenland, and for a number of years it will seize large resources in Greenland's economy'* (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 7). Allegedly, Lars Løkke Rasmussen also prevented the Chinese purchase of Grønneidal. Multiple sources confirmed that Lars Løkke Rasmussen thought that one superpower (the US) with a military base in Greenland was enough (Matzen, 2017). Without directly turning the Chinese bid down, it was done through diplomatic means. Even though that Greenland had actively tried to attract Chinese investments, the Danish securitisation of Chinese investments in Greenland discursively indicates that Chinese presence on Greenland could be an existential threat to national security.

The increased Chinese interference in Greenland follows the same pattern as in many other places in the world, which has caused tension between China and the US on what the US calls a 'debt trap'. A characteristic of this pattern is that Chinese investments mostly benefit China (Abi-Habib, 2018; Tan, 2019). One example is Sri Lanka. The patterns of and lessons to be learned from the Chinese entry in Sri Lanka can be used to say something about what is likely to happen if China invests in Greenland.

In 2009, the Sri Lankan president wanted a huge port in his hometown Hambantota and made a deal with the Chinese state-owned company China Harbour Engineering Company on its construction. In addition, China started to give low-rate loans to Sri Lanka to finance the new port facilities. The loans were relatively small and were issued through the state-owned EXIM (Xinhua, 2015). The same bank that the Greenlandic delegation had a meeting with in 2017. China Harbour Engineering Company, a subsidiary company to the CCCC which bid on the building of the Greenlandic airports, were hired as the constructors (Abi-Habib, 2018). The new Sri Lankan port has now become part of the BRI. The construction was more expensive than calculated, and Sri Lanka had to borrow additional money from China. Now, the loan was renegotiated to a much higher rate (Abi-Habib, 2018).

When the port opened in 2010, it immediately began to lose money. Sri Lanka fell behind in its payments and was unable to pay off the loans obtained from China. But then China came to Sri

Lanka with an offer. The port could be foreclosed to China to pay off the debt due to Sri Lanka's default of the loans (Abi-Habib, 2018). In 2017, China got full control over the port on a 99-year lease plus a neighbouring 60 square kilometre area (Abi-Habib, 2018). This is just one example of China's ambitious use of loans to acquire influence around the world in support of the BRI, and this could also be the Chinese model to interfere in Greenland. According to a *New York Times* analysis, China has helped finance a minimum of 35 ports around the world in the past decade, and Greenland could be the next place to receive investments in infrastructure (Abi-Habib, 2018). China bases its global investments on what President Xi Jinping has called advanced 'win-win' cooperation that will benefit all involved (Reuters, 2019). But many poorer countries are unable to pay the Chinese back. In Africa, it has been seen that Chinese military engagement has been aimed at advancing and protecting China's strategic and economic interests, especially the BRI (Nantulya, 2019 ; Viggo Jakobsen, 2019). Here, the Chinese willingness to play hardball to collect its debts should be taken into consideration regarding the coming Arctic strategy.

The Chinese 'win-win' cooperation has started a debate and has intensified harsh accusations against President Xi Jinping's signature BRI. Several South Asian and African countries owe China a significant sum of money that they might not be able to pay back (Abi-Habib, 2018). The Chinese investments in Sri Lanka do not represent exactly the same situation as the current Chinese interference in Greenland, because there were also important geo-political differences at stake due to Chinese-Indian relations influencing Sri Lanka. However, the experiences from Sri Lanka can still be applied to understanding which pattern China is operating from and can be used as a lesson for the KoD in how to handle the enterprise. But most important, it shows how China plays by different rules than the West. They play by their own rules and do not follow the established world order. China is creating a new world order by constructing its own infrastructure and trade routes (Bremmer, 2019).

China is challenging the US' position by offering new ideas on ideology, trade, and technology. The last-mentioned area can be seen in the Chinese company Huawei's struggle for global dominance in 5G mobile networks, which the US fears could be used by China to spy on or disrupt communication due to the interlinkage between Chinese companies and Chinese political system (Ferguson, 2019; Bowler, 2020). Niall Ferguson calls this pattern, which is reminiscent of the features of Cold War clashes between the USSR and the US, Cold War 2.0. Back then the arms race

was concerned with nuclear weapons and a space race to prove the superiority of technology (History.com, 2020). Now, it is fought over economy and technology. But once the USSR and US actually did cooperate. Likewise, China and the US have cooperated in what Ferguson and Xiang Xu call 'Chimerica', an economic order *'that combined Chinese export-led economic growth with U.S. over-consumption'* (Ferguson & Xu, 2018). It was a cooperation between the superpower and the very possible future rival. This cooperation is past, and the competition is now in full bloom. China has gone from being a regional to a global player due to its economic development, the profits of which can be used to expand its interference globally (Goodman & Perlez, 2018), as well as in Greenland, which falls within in traditional US' spheres of influence. To understand this pattern of a rising power challenging the ruling power, the Thucydides trap provides an applicable lens.

The Thucydides trap is about the rising Athens rivalled ruling Sparta in the ancient Greece. This positioning made war inevitable and ended in the Peloponnesian War. It is a pattern seen many times before, like when rising Germany challenged British hegemony, resulting in the First World War. Likewise, the US challenged British supremacy in the American Revolution and emerged as the dominant power in the Western hemisphere (Allison, 2017). Similarly, China wants to expand its economic influence globally based on the BRI. Not through seizing new territory as the US did through the Monroe Doctrine or as the USSR did during the Cold War by expanding to the countries that had been liberated from the Nazi control; but there are similarities. Present in all the examples is the expansion of the sphere of influence, which often ends with a war. Based on historical records a team at Harvard Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs has concluded that over the past 500 years the result of Thucydides trap cases has in 12 out of 16 cases been war. When war was avoided huge efforts to adjust were made by for both the challenger and the challenged party (Allison, 2015). The ascent of the USSR and the Cold War are examples of avoiding the Thucydides trap (Allison, 2017). This was achieved through a number of nuclear weapon reduction agreements and adjustments from both competitors, which reduced the tensions (Huebert, 2019).

But now the increased tensions between China and the US have led them on a collision course towards war and Greenland is a part of the picture. China is interfering in the US' sphere of interests and thereby challenges the position of the US in global politics. The US is fully aware that

China seeks a closer economic relationship with Greenland. It is therefore very likely that the US' bid on Greenland was prompted by the ongoing China-US trade war and China's ability to expand its sphere of influence. The US may have a wish to both secure the strategic importance of Greenland and prevent Greenlandic natural resources from falling into the hands of China. Bearing these events in mind, there is a potential for Greenland to be pulled into a new war because there might be more to China's growing interference in Greenland than just ensuring access to potential Greenlandic resources. More Chinese influence in Greenland might mean less US influence. As Lars Løkke Rasmussen stated, it is difficult to imagine two superpowers both established in Greenland and such a scenario would probably be bad for Greenland due to the Thucydides trap. From applying Sri Lankan history and similar Chinese investments as part of the BRI, it is possible to state that a deal with China is also a deal with the Chinese government, who are challenging the global position of the US, a close ally of the KoD. Even though it is argued by the Chinese that the BRI is a win-win cooperation, the Chinese will not build airports and airstrips in Greenland for the sake of the Greenlanders. It is part of a bigger plan and would very likely be of dual-use for both Chinese civil and military activities.

Summation of case analysis

By applying history to current events and situations, it has been possible to identify parallels in history and similarities in patterns of behaviour. Greenland became important both today and during the Cold War because the great powers ascribe a certain importance to Greenland. From this pattern it can be seen that the importance of Greenland varies according to great power tensions. The US is now facing both China and Russia in the Arctic region, which heavily influences the dynamics of Greenland and thereby also the KoD. Furthermore, it has been shown that Danish and Greenlandic perceptions diverge regarding whether the interference is a security issue or not.

Strategic narratives interfering Greenland

In the second part of the analysis, the framework of Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle on international systems, identity, and issue narratives will be used to categorise the identified patterns of foreign interference and understand the motivations behind this interference. This is done by breaking down the findings to reveal the strategic narratives that guide the political behaviour of the case actors.

The US narrative

Crucial to the analysis of the US *international system narrative* on the Arctic is the intensified and conflictual competition with China and Russia. This is reflected in the US strategy on the Arctic region: *'Many positive, cooperative trends endure in the region. At the same time, the region is increasingly uncertain, with a deepening and intensifying of certain problematic strategic trends'* (DoD Arctic Strategy, 2019, p. 3). The narrative frames the Arctic region as increasingly competitive and as securitised. Therefore, the Arctic issues are no longer just political issues but now they are securitized by the US. Russia and China are seen as competitors in the Arctic because of the Russian military build-up and Chinese economic interference in the region. This narrative leaves no place for China in the Arctic governance and Chinese ambitions in the Arctic region are often questioned. This was seen when the US influenced Denmark to block a Chinese investment in the Greenlandic airports. These dynamics in the region have drawn US attention to Greenland in a way that has not been seen since the Cold War.

From the interests and patterns identified above, the US' actions can be boiled down to and categorised as reactions to the threat China and Russia present to the US' national security. The new US offensive in Greenland is motivated and justified by this narrative on the Arctic region. The US is competing with Russia and China. Both US Secretary of State Pompeo and US Ambassador Carla Sands, as representatives of the US government, have discursively constructed the international system narrative through sharpened rhetoric and signalled that Greenland is part of its geopolitical zone of influence, and China and Russia should stay away. This strategic narrative on the international system was already discursively stated by the US General Harp Arnold in 1950: *'If there is a Third World War, it's strategic center will be the north pole'* (Emmerson, 2011, p. 118). Back then China was probably not thought of as a potential adversary in the Arctic, but Russia clearly was. Now, this narrative has re-emerged due to the new Cold War pattern influencing the region.

The *identity narrative* on Greenland promotes the US as a strong and reliable Arctic partner to the KoD. This identity narrative is connected to the long historical ties between the US and the KoD; now these are being strengthened to create the best platform from which to interfere in Greenland to protect the homeland. This identity narrative means that a threat against Greenland is a threat against the US (Breum, 2018, p. 124). In relation to a newly announced aid package, Sands

discursively constructed this narrative saying, that the US will be the KoD's 'preferred partner' in the Arctic region (BBC, 2020). This status has become so important that the US allocates millions in Greenland, which is closely related to the narrative on the Arctic region as becoming more competitive. Without mentioning names, Sands calls China and Russia '*less trustworthy governments*' who '*shape the values of the region after their own repressive image*' (Sands, 2020). The US will pay Greenland to remain its preferred partner and prevent China or Russia gaining more influence in Greenland. Through this narrative, it will be possible for the US to maintain its position in Greenland and protect its national security.

In 1920, the US refused to recognise any third-party power's purchase rights to Danish interests in Greenland (The Secretary of State, 1920). Nor will the US now do this because of this identity narrative where the US sees themselves as the rightful ally of Greenland and the KoD. The US has a history in Greenland like no other foreign state has. They have an identity in and special relation to Greenland which neither China nor Russia should touch as 'third-party powers' interfering in Greenland. This is strongly related to the Monroe Doctrine as a strategy to remove foreign powers from the Western hemisphere, in this case Greenland.

The US *issue narrative* is the US' lack of control in Greenland. The US tried to solve this issue by trying to buy Greenland, increase its presence on the island, and now offering an aid package. All these are attempts to protect the US' national security. In the US strategy on the Arctic, the region is seen as part of the US homeland and the strategy includes '*defending U.S. sovereignty and the homeland, including through early warning and missile defense; protecting U.S. critical infrastructure; and achieving domain awareness to protect U.S. security interests in the region*' (DoD Arctic Strategy, 2019, p. 5). In this context, the motivation to buy Greenland could be that the US fears that Danish Defence is incapable of protecting these interests; this is an issue for the US national security.

Ideally, the US wants to own Greenland in order to be able to navigate much more freely without consulting others. It would secure a better foothold for the US in the region and it would also prevent the Chinese diplomatic and economic offensive from interfering in the US' backyard. The US could then circumvent having to ask anyone for permission to store nuclear weapons as they had to in the H.C. Hansen letter. Likewise, the US could build more bases on Greenland than just the Thule Air Base to defend their exposed flank against the Russian military build-up. But when

the offer on Greenland failed, the US increased its interference by other means, which might also solve parts of the issue narrative and allow the US to protect their Arctic interests better.

It seems that the US does not trust Chinese intentions in Greenland. Therefore, the US is concerned that Greenland will become economically dependent on China and thereby vulnerable to political pressure from China, which could be a threat to the US. According to the issue narrative, it makes sense that the US wants to prevent Chinese presence in Greenland. This is also supported by US Secretary of State Pompeo when he said, *'The United States and Arctic nations welcome transparent Chinese investment that reflect economic interests, not national security ambitions'* (Pompeo, 2019).

The increased interference in Greenland is rooted in the island's strategic location close to the US homeland. This strategic location means, and has probably meant since Seward's first bid, that the island can be used to block a potential enemy, in this case China and Russia, from accessing US territory. Therefore, the strategic narrative on Greenland is motivated by protecting the US homeland best possible.

The Russian narrative

The Russian *international system narrative* portrays the Arctic region as a place of peace and dialogue, where there is no potential for conflict because Russia values being a cooperative actor (Konyshev, Sergunin, & Subbotin, 2017, p. 1; Allan, 2018). While several Western media has portrayed the Russian military build-up in the region as a consequence of the Ukraine crisis, very little actually happened in the Russian perception of the Arctic region (Konyshev, Sergunin, & Subbotin, 2017, p. 17) The Russian FM, Sergey Lavrov, supported this narrative on the Arctic when he said that *'Russia has always considered the Arctic as a territory of mutually respectful dialogue'* (Lavrov, 2016). This narrative refers to the idea of AE, where the region is exceptional due to unique cooperation within the region (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 11). But with the current tensions, the US and NATO are seen as possible aggressors and the Western military build-up in the region is viewed as a threat to Russia. President Putin made this strategic narrative very clear at the 2007 Munich Security Conference, where he declared that the West led by the US had taken advantage of Russian weakness to attack Russian interests (Putin, 2007). President Putin stated that he would no longer tolerate this behaviour from the West. On this basis, Russia is convinced that the US and

NATO are trying to contain Russian influence in the Arctic region (DDIS, 2019, p. 14). The current offensive US behaviour around Greenland therefore fits perfectly into the Russian narrative on the Arctic region. The US is the aggressor and Russia is the cooperative actor living up to its obligations under the Ilulissat Declaration. But it also fits to the Russian meta-narrative that frames the US as constantly seeking global dominance without consulting other nations (DDIS, 2019, p. 18; Kabel, 2017; Hutchings & Szostek, 2015). Here, Russia finds itself in a never-ending conflict with the West.

Russia does not have an identity narrative regarding Greenland as such. Instead the *identity narrative* portrays Russia as the natural leader of the Arctic region, which is justified by the fact that Russia is the 'largest Arctic state' (DDIS, 2019, p. 13). This influences Greenland as Russia perceives the US' increased interference as a threat. It is this narrative that motivates the Russian military build-up and justifies this as defensive measures to secure Russia's leader status, its sovereignty, and vital economic interests in the region. In that connection, Russia sees the increased US and NATO presence as a threat to the protection of its northern flank (DDIS, 2019, p. 13). The planting of the Russian flag under the North Pole can be seen as a reflection of the identity narrative because Russia wants to underline the Russian Federation's role in the Arctic region. In the Russian cultural, economic, and military self-understanding, Russia has always had dominance in the Arctic, and it does not seem that they are willing to give that up. Leader of the flag expedition Artur Chilingarov said that '*Russia must win. Russia has what it takes to win. The Arctic has always been Russian*' (Emmerson, 2011, p. 95). This supports the Russian strategic narrative, which therefore is the basis they act on and decide their behaviour from.

The forged letter is an indication of the Russian *issue narrative*. The letter supports the strategic narrative of the US destroying the Arctic constructive cooperation and being a risk to the peace and stability in the Arctic region. The Russian motivation for this narrative is possibly to maintain its Arctic leadership and the status quo of the region by the use of active measures. Increased US presence in Greenland would unsettle Russia and be perceived as a threat to its role as Arctic leader. With this in mind, the timing of the letter was perfect, and a possible motivation could be to undermine the relationship between the US and the KoD, by implying that the US did go behind Denmark's back and cooperated directly with Greenland. Hereby, it would be easier for Russia to maintain the role as the Arctic leader and the status quo of the region by the use of active measures.

Navigating from this narrative, Russia took advantage of the US' offer on Greenland to ride on the tensions between the KoD and the US to further its own position in the Arctic region, and to support a broader strategic narrative about the US. Like the before-mentioned Ambassador Barbin's quote on the US undermining dialogue and cooperation in the Arctic, Russian diplomats and media will be quick to seize the opportunity to support this narrative by appealing to the maintenance of Arctic peace and making the US look like the aggressive party (Splidsboel Hansen, 2020).

This kind of double standard, moral decay, and arrogance of power are characteristics that are often attributed to the US by Russia as part of their strategic narrative (Hutchings & Szostek, 2015). Here, it is used as a tool to connect disjointed events by providing a specific interpretation of how the US and its 'hostile activities' should be understood in a Russian context, and also to achieve the political goal of exposing the US (De Graaf & Dimitriu, 2016). As the identified pattern has shown, Russia takes stories out of one context and uses them in another to expose the US as a threat and the Western world as guilty of double standards. Versions of a more or less fabricated reality will be communicated into the national and global information environment about Greenland to support Russia's meta-narrative and weaken the West (Kabel, 2017, p. 18). The issue narrative provides the opportunity to undermine the Western world and further Russia's own interests at others' expense in global politics. This 'instrument' is viewed as a matter of protecting Russian national security and is highly motivated by the protection of Russian status in the Arctic region as well as minimising support for the US (Hutchings & Szostek, 2015).

The Chinese narrative

In the *international system narrative*, China openly acknowledges that they have superpower ambitions in the Arctic and Greenland in its first Arctic strategy. One of the introductory paragraphs is very indicative of the Chinese interest: '*The Arctic situation now goes beyond its original inter-Arctic States or regional nature, having a vital bearing on the interests of States outside the region and the interests of the international community as a whole, as well as on the survival, the development, and the shared future for mankind. It is an issue with global implications and international impacts*' (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2018). Here, it is very clear that China considers the Arctic region as globally important and that China as a near-Arctic state has to take an active part in this trans-regional issue, which marks a self-confident approach to the Arctic region. In 2010, the now retired Chinese Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo illustrated this narrative by

saying that '*China's population accounts for one-fifth of the world's population, so why shouldn't we get a fifth of the resources in the Antarctic and Arctic?*' (Viggo Jakobsen, 2019). Strategically, China narrates the Arctic region as internationalised and projects a more global vision to the region. This gives China a legitimate reason to hold a central position in Arctic. This strategic narrative supports the Chinese pursuit of a new world order, and the vision is cemented in the BRI that aims to position China as a superpower interfering globally.

The Chinese *identity narrative* on Greenland is relatively new but began very soon after China declared itself a near-Arctic state. This narrative is closely related to the Chinese narrative on the Arctic region because it supports and legitimises Chinese ideas of the region as a trans-regional issue that involves and impacts non-Arctic states. When China narrates itself as a near-Arctic state, it reflects the wish and ambition to be accepted as an equal and important stakeholder in the Arctic region and Greenland. Furthermore, China portray itself as an actor respecting international law. Most relevant here, China respects Danish territorial sovereignty over Greenland, which Chinese General Li Quan has called a One-Denmark policy (Turnowsky, 2019). This narrative is intended to signal to other partners involved in Greenland that the new Chinese identity in the Arctic and Greenland has no consequences and does not influence the existing norms in Greenland. This might reflect Beijing's fear of being perceived as an external intruder influencing the KoD. However, this narrative is currently not working in Denmark or the US.

The Chinese *issue narrative* is the lack of Greenland in the BRI. Therefore, China insistently shows interest in investments in Greenland in order to solve this problem. Here, the Chinese investment is narrated as a fruitful 'win-win' cooperation for both China and Greenland. But these Chinese interests are securitised and are met with strong opposition from the US and the Danish government, who will have the last say if these interests could somehow be a question of security. Therefore, interfering too directly in Greenlandic matters would not be in accordance with the law-based identity China tries to frame itself within. This would be contradictory to the One-Denmark policy, which would possibly undermine the effectiveness of China's strategic narratives (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 8).

Therefore, China is not rushing and will patiently wait for the opportunity to gain footing in Greenland. Due to the Chinese One-Denmark policy, it is expected that China will respect Danish

sovereignty over Greenland. But the above experience also shows that the Chinese pattern mainly focuses on their own gain. This is an important aspect to bear in mind. The Chinese will probably not build expensive infrastructure for the sake of generosity. Through this narrative, Greenland is seen as a small piece in a big puzzle as part of a very long-term plan to become the most dominant player in the world. Therefore, China will probably keep pushing for influence in the Arctic region including Greenland. The BRI is a long-term strategy, so it does not matter if China gets the influence they want tomorrow or in several years, as long as Chinese influence is increased at some point.

Chapter claims

By triangulating Applied History and strategic narratives it has been possible to pinpoint what is likely to happen in the future and to understand the underlying motivations behind the interference. From the outline of the strategic narratives, it can be claimed that the US' interest in Greenland is closely related to the protection of national security due to Greenland's strategic location. For Russia, the interest mainly builds upon its role as Arctic leader, which means a wish to maintain the status quo and prevent the US from interfering in Greenland. For China, the interest in Greenland is to ensure economic growth and geopolitical influence through the BRI. Therefore, it is China and the US who are the most active players in the increased geopolitical and economic competition around Greenland. They want to gain something specific in Greenland while Russia wants to prevent the US from getting more influence in order to preserve Russia's role as Arctic leader.

Part III: How does foreign interference influence the Kingdom of Denmark?

In this section, there will be a discussion of *how* increased Chinese, Russian, and US interference influences the KoD having the coming Arctic strategy in mind. The question is whether Greenland can still be categorised by practical, depoliticised cooperation between, normally, competing superpowers or if this exceptionalism is no longer relevant because of a new era of uncertainty in the Arctic region similar to a Cold War 2.0. It is gradually difficult for the KoD to hold on to the ambitions of AE because Greenland is influenced by global politics. Correspondingly, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the KoD to deal with the increased interference internally because of a Danish wish to remain an Arctic nation, which is only possible if Greenland remains in the realm, and conversely, a Greenlandic wish for independence.

Cold War 2.0?

A three-way balance in the Arctic could be the beginning of an icy Cold War. From the triangulation of applied history and the strategic narrative, two streams of conflict were identified. One between Russia and the US, and one between China and the US. It is here discussed whether either stream is likely to break into Cold War 2.0.

It seems that Denmark, responsible for the Greenlandic security, has more or less adopted the confrontational US analysis of the situation in the Arctic: both China and Russia are geopolitical rivals. There is a Danish tendency to plan and navigate from worst-case scenarios regarding Greenland, and this creates unfortunate dynamics (Splidsboel Hansen, 2019; Burke, 2019). Currently, the situation is caught between a collective wish for cooperation and stability and an individual wish to gain more influence, which could easily trigger a security dilemma if transparency is underestimated (Runge Olesen & Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2014).

Since the crisis in Ukraine and the worsened relationship between Russia and the West, there have been growing concerns about whether the great power tension would be the trigger point of a new Cold War in the Arctic region (Huebert, 2019; Splidsboel Hansen, 2018). The renewed positioning in the Arctic is well-known, and now the US will withdraw from the post-Cold War Open Skies Treaty that allowed *'each state-party to conduct short-notice, unarmed, reconnaissance flights over the others' entire territories to collect data on military forces and activities'*. Russia and the US used the treaty to keep an eye on each other's activities. But the US withdraw is based on Russian violations of the treaty (Pompeo, 2020; Arms Control Association, 2020). A US exit means further deterioration of the control of the global arms, which is already under pressure with the US exit from the Cold War Nuclear Arms Treaty in 2019 (BBC, 2019).

From applying history, it would be easy to categorise the current tensions under the Cold War 2.0 category, but it is a 'dangerous myth' (Burke, 2019). Often it is forgotten that modernisation of the Russian army and the increased Russian military presence in the Arctic started long before the Ukraine crisis. Before the crisis Russian military activities were seen as legitimate state behaviour, but afterwards they have been interpreted as a sign of aggression (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 12; Konyshv, Sergunin, & Subbotin, 2017). According to the Russian strategic narrative, the Russian

rearmament of the Arctic should not be understood as a sign of a Cold War 2.0. Thus, it would be a misinterpretation of the situation to follow the US reading of Russian rearmament of the Arctic region as an offensive and as a result of the worsened relationship with the West, as it started many years before this worsened relationship. Russia is rearming the Arctic and has laid out its ambitions in its 15-year development master plan for the Russian Arctic, but this alone does not constitute an escalation of military tensions (Burke, 2019). Denmark and the US have invested in the military in the Arctic too, not to wage war but to decrease tensions. The current Russian strategy seems to be motivated by a strong desire to manifest its Arctic role and to protect its economic interests (Heininen, Sergunin, & Yarovoy, 2014, p. 79). According to the Russian narrative, this development is a natural step towards protecting itself. If the findings from applying history from the Cold War were followed alone, it could be expected that these capabilities would be used offensively against the US or other nations, but according to Russia's narrative, it is more likely that they will be used as deterrence and to secure the Russian part of the Arctic. Military activities are not necessarily equal to war, but it can also be a tool for security services (Burke, 2019; Russian Federation's Policy for the Arctic, 2008). From this view, the protection of the long, open Russian border requires a great deal of military equipment and personnel (Tastum, 2020). The rearmament should then be seen as the protection of vital economic interests of the NSR and the region in general. As such, the Russian intentions are in line with international Arctic cooperation and the development is comparable to the interests of other Arctic states (Heininen, Sergunin, & Yarovoy, 2014, p. 4).

During the Cold War, Russian motivations in the Arctic were dictated by the political and military confrontation with the US. But as shown in the above analysis, today Russia emphasises AE and is pursuing a desecuritisation of the region with a focus on cooperation (Konyshchev, Sergunin, & Subbotin, 2017, p. 17). Russia narrates the region as crucial for its identity and the US as the enemy. But this does not explicitly mean that Russia wants to fight over the Arctic with more than the use of active measures when the US stands on the threshold of too much interference in Greenland. It can also be doubted whether Russia is even capable of competing in a new arms race if they wanted to (Splidsboel Hansen, 2018). This means that the military confrontation is not nearly as intense as during the Cold War and the rearmament is not a reaction to the US as such. It is driven by other interests, as has been shown in the strategic narratives. From the perspective of the KoD, the Russian interest in Greenland seems to be variable to the US interest in furthering its

position on the island. It is almost like a formula: if Greenland has too-close ties with the US, this is portrayed as a threat to Russian security and there will be a reaction. Otherwise, Russia is neutral towards Greenland. So, in the US-Russia relation, the risk of a Cold War 2.0 seems relatively small.

The competition between China and the US also echoes a pattern that is well-known from the Cold War. Today, China has become the US' main economic and geopolitical rival. The US slammed China for its 'predatory economic interests', with similarities to the ideological confrontations between the USSR and the US. The ideological confrontation between China and the US is sharp but it is not as acute as the liberal democracy versus Marxism-Leninism confrontation which characterised the Cold War (Splidsboel Hansen, 2018). China works from a different mindset than the US in its approach to becoming the most dominant superpower. But China and the US are not as different as the USSR was to the West. The ongoing competition seems to be mostly based on trade, technology, and infrastructure. The Chinese presence in Greenland tells something about China's global aspirations. However, this presence is not the same as in the Cold War. China does not have the same wishes of a world revolution based on BRI as the USSR had in challenging the US' global position. From this, it does not seem that China has intentions to torpedo the already existing order in the Arctic. This supports the ideas outlined in the paper on respecting the Arctic states' sovereignty (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2018). Nonetheless, China will still pursue its BRI interests in the region by investing in infrastructure and acquiring of natural resources in the Arctic.

From the strategic narratives, it seems that China is mostly interested in investing in Greenland. But there could also be a military interest that is impossible to detect through open source analysis. This interest could complicate the situation for the KoD, and Greenland could become the centre for new confrontations. If or when China moves into the Arctic region militarily e.g. with undetectable nuclear-armed submarines, China's relationship to both Russia and the US will get more complicated. While China and Russia are on good relations currently in the Arctic, such a development could be a game changer. It would be similar in the case of the US and NATO (Huebert, 2019; Brady, 2019). The Chinese approach to Greenland and the Arctic region as a trans-regional matter and public property could further add fuel to the fire in line with the aforementioned Thucydides trap. The situation could easily escalate if China wants to cement its role as a near-Arctic state through military presence deeper in the region. Following this, China and the US

might end up in the Thucydides trap and the result would be war. This would mean Greenland being trapped between two superpowers. Agreements and treaties were how the USSR and the US escaped the Thucydides trap during the Cold War; it is very likely that the Chinese presence in the Arctic region needs to be dealt with in an agreement too.

With these tendencies in the Arctic region, the US, in accordance with their strategic narrative, feels a need to enforce a stronger presence in Greenland so that the region will be not left open to Chinese and Russian interference. At least, this is what the US is trying to achieve with the reopening of the consulate, the aid package, and the offer on Greenland. This pursuit of more influence over Greenland is where the pattern of the Cold War becomes very present in the Arctic region. But the threat no longer comes from Russia alone because the renewed interest indicates how unsettled the US is by Chinese economic expansion into the US sphere. Therefore, the US wants to limit the Chinese space of action around Greenland, and this containment is reminiscent of the Cold War (DDIS, 2019, p. 17; Kimberley, 2019). Unfortunately, the US has narrated the situation as being equal to a new Cold War, which influences negatively on the KoD. The US faces more competition in the region, but this does not mean a new Cold War. It is important for the KoD to keep these nuances in mind, so that the current tension is distinguished from the Cold War in the coming Arctic strategy, and so that the KoD can signal to the US that there is nothing to be afraid of.

As shown above, the current tensions in the Arctic are driven by different motivations than during the Cold War. The place is the same, but the motivations are different. Instead, it can be said that the tendencies during the Cold War have been forgotten for some time due to an exhausted Russia and the West's focus on other conflicts (Huebert, 2019). In connection with the increased tensions between Russia and the US and China and the US, Greenland's importance has re-emerged. As the analysis shows, this importance is not new but varies according to the dynamics in great power politics. When the Arctic became important during the Cold War, it was a result of larger events outside the region (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 18). Interference and tensions have increased, but this is not because of a new Cold War: the tensions are naturally there because the great powers are back. As Burke argues when the tensions is framed as Cold War 2.0 *'it detracts from the broader roles that militaries play throughout the Arctic and stokes the very tensions it warns of'* (Burke, 2019). If the tensions are framed as the onset of a Cold War 2.0, they can be interpreted as an

escalation, which should be borne in mind when developing the coming Arctic strategy. This is not to say that the increased military presence should not be taken seriously. It should, but the coming strategy should not frame it as a Cold War 2.0.

The end of Arctic Exceptionalism

While the outlined intensified competition and the great powers' interference in Greenland does not amount to a Cold War 2.0, the military build-up in the region and increased exercises still challenge depoliticised cooperation. This challenges the AE and whether the region's special post-Cold War 'low tension' is possible to maintain.

The KoD's current Arctic strategy aim of '*a peaceful, secure, and collaborative Arctic*' has shown to be increasingly difficult to achieve due to the great power tensions (The Kingdom of Denmark, 2011, p. 7). From the beginning the AE was difficult to maintain because it came in the wake of the Cold War. At that time the strategic importance of Greenland had declined, and AE was neither challenged nor questioned. The renewed distrust between Russia and the US has made the former cooperation difficult. This has pushed the two sides into a new relationship, which is far from the relationship in the post-Cold War period with the aim of an Arctic 'zone of peace and cooperation' (Gorbachev, 1987). Now, both actions and sharp rhetoric challenge the wish of AE and the Ilulissat Declaration. Käpylä and Mikkola's four assumptions on why Arctic conflict potential is exaggerated, will now be used to discuss against that Arctic is exceptional.

The first assumption, *there is not that much to fight over*, has increasingly shown to be inaccurate. From the analysis, the increased foreign interference signals that there is something to fight about. Otherwise, they would probably not be interested in Greenland. It will most likely not trigger a full-blown war, but there is a clash of interests and at the given time, the fight is primarily conducted verbally. The Chinese strategic narrative on the Arctic as a trans-regional issue puts extra pressure on AE because the involvement of China, as a non-Arctic state, shows that the region is like any other place in an interconnected world.

A sign of the 'fightworthiness' of Greenland is the US' interference in Greenlandic matters, which led to the blocking of two Chinese investment attempts. Here, global politics are again influencing Greenland in the context of the ongoing China-US trade war, which is a threat to the stability in the

Arctic region. Both Danish rejections of the Chinese investments in Greenland were probably due to the US' low tolerance for Chinese interference in the Arctic. The US has focused on other global issues, like the war on terror, in recent years. Now, they are waking up to a two-fold competition in the Arctic. Moreover, the two competitors are cooperating and exercising together militarily (Brady, 2019). Very recently there have been hasty initiatives to further the US position in Greenland: the reactivation of the US' Second fleet, new icebreakers, the strong desire to increase US presence in Greenland, and now directly 'investing' in Greenland through the aid package. This combined with strong criticism of the Chinese and Russian activities in the Arctic tells us that there is something to fight about and that the US will fight for it in order to prevent the two competitors from getting closer to the US homeland. On the other side, Russian interest in Greenland follows US interest in Greenland. Russia will most likely not be willing to deploy troops to fight over Greenland against the US in combination with the NATO-alliance. But the Russian attempt to weaken the US' power in Greenland by forging a letter is a clear sign that Greenland has regained its strategic importance and that there is something to fight about from that perspective too. Hereby, Russia used active measures, indicating a break with AE, even though Russia often emphasises AE. Now, the Arctic issue *'is both constrained and enabled by global forces and dynamics – be they economic, political, or environmental in nature'* (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 4). These developments are the contrary to the idea of AE.

The second assumption states that *the Arctic area has governance structures that foster co-operation and defuse potential conflict dynamics*. When US Secretary of State Pompeo called the Arctic *'an arena of global power and competition'* at an AC meeting, he broke with the tradition of not discussing security and defence issues in the council (Viggo Jakobsen, 2019). This new 'governance structure' did not defuse the potential of conflicts around Greenland. The aid package and the US wish to buy Greenland did also not defuse the potential of conflict. Instead, it did the opposite. Russia accused the US of undermining dialogue and cooperation and relying on a policy of confrontation in the region instead, in order to achieve dominance in this part of the world (Kjeldtoft, 2020). According to these harsh words, the aid package signals an alliance that aims to exclude both China and Russia from Greenland to increase US presence, which does not foster cooperation but instead creates division within the Arctic and is contrary to the AE. The historical bipolar order in the Arctic region will very likely be replaced by a three-way structure of

governance that is not without complications due to the clash of the different interests in Greenland and the region generally (Huebert, 2019).

The third assumption, *Arctic states have explicitly expressed their interest in international cooperation*, has been shown to not be valid for Greenland anymore. For a long time, international cooperation in the Arctic has worked fine. An example is that the Russian flag-planting episode in 2007 did not lead to further escalation, because of the adoption of the Ilulissat Declaration in 2008 (Käpylä & Mikkola, 2015, p. 7). But after the Ukraine crisis, Western distrust of Russia has increased, and vice versa. Russia has shown that this distrust is legitimate by interfering in elections and – in this case – creating a forged letter to interfere on the relationship between the KoD and the US. On the other side, the US is trying to establish a closer bond with Greenland, which has also increased tensions instead of cooperation, and again, the China-US relationship makes it difficult to cooperate in general.

The fourth assumption is that *the Arctic states have little to gain by letting the Arctic dynamics slip into a conflict state that would create an unfruitful investment and development environment for Arctic exploitation*. The general rearmament of the Arctic and the ongoing China-US trade war are threats to the stability in the Arctic region. Even though it creates tensions and jeopardizes the AE, all three actors see the attraction of a potential economic or political gain in the Arctic or Greenland, thus disproving this assumption. Once the AE was a mutual responsibility, now the actors are focused on their own interests.

Käpylä and Mikkola's four assumptions are no longer applicable to Greenland and the Arctic; therefore the Arctic must be understood within a broader and more complex context. AE has come to an end because the Arctic is increasingly intertwined with global politics due to the renewed interests in Greenland and the region. By applying history, this argument becomes even more valid due to correlations between several periods of conflict around Greenland. The Arctic was exceptional for a period of time, but most often it has been influenced by global politics. The period of AE was only possible due to Russian exhaustion and the improvements were not about a better relationship (Huebert, 2019). Consequently, when China too started to show interest for Greenland, the AE received the death blow.

Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg argue that AE is a desecuritisation of a security issue. When the actors act entirely opposite to this idea of a depoliticised and conflict-free zone by bringing global politics into the region and hindering good cooperation, it is not because a Cold War 2.0 is looming. It is because the key actors had, for a period, marginalised the importance of Greenland and the Arctic region. Now, with different political and economic interests, the question is whether it is possible to restore the region to a zone of peace and cooperation in spite of the ongoing Cold War 2.0 pattern and its actors again finding the Arctic and Greenland highly valuable. The change from a two-way to a three-way Arctic balance has made the condition for AE almost impossible. The Chinese presence in Greenland and the Arctic region is the manifestation of reality that the region is influenced by global politics.

The coming Arctic strategy should not rely on AE, as the region is no longer exceptional with low tensions. The new strategy needs to deal with the Arctic and Greenland not as the KoD wishes it to be, but in the context of how the Arctic is today (Emmerson, 2011, p. 345). Thus, the strategy should treat the region as a zone of global cooperation and competition with space for economic and political interests. The Arctic has again become a battleground, but this does not mean that the Arctic has become a war zone as during the Cold War (Emmerson, 2011, p. 344). The great power tensions should not be seen as a sign of failure for the Arctic region, but as a new chapter of Arctic governance which needs a global perspective. For a long time, there have been achievements in the desecuritisation of Greenland, but there has not been much progress in achieving security, which must be the aim now in a more competitive security environment (Heininen, Exner-Pirot, & Barnes, 2019). This will need new initiatives. Currently, neither the Ilulissat Declaration nor the AC deals with security and defence issues, and they do not take into account the growing Chinese interest in the Arctic region (Viggo Jakobsen, 2019; Groenning, 2016).

Peter Viggo Jakobsen, Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Defence College, has suggested that a new Ilulissat Declaration should be written. An initiative like this could kill two birds with one stone. It would provide more control over Chinese economic, diplomatic, and military interests, and would require cooperation between the US and Russia to formulate clear rules on security and defence issues in the Arctic. Based on the experience from the Cold War, this could be a way to decrease the tensions in the Arctic region. Last time tensions increased the KoD initiated the issuing

of the Ilulissat Declaration; they could do this again to react to today's challenging great power interference in Greenland.

Divided hopes for the future

The KoD's coming Arctic strategy needs to treat the foreign interference in Greenland in the context of a more competitive environment. But the foreign interference in Greenland, as has been shown in the analysis, is perceived differently by Denmark and Greenland. The two parts have different hopes for the future of the KoD and this complicates a joint approach to the issues.

From the strategic narratives, it was argued that Russia does not have a direct interest in Greenland but is more focused on preventing the US from gaining more influence. Therefore, less emphasis will be put on Russia's role in the future of Greenland discussed in this paragraph.

To become independent, Greenland will need money from outside based on the argument that there are too few people in Greenland to drive an independent state (Breum, 2018, p. 120). PM Kim Nielsen and a large entourage went to China in search of Chinese investors to break Greenland's dependence on Denmark (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 7). Greenland hopes that Chinese capital could pave the way to independence. From a Greenlandic perspective, the foreign interference is desecuritized so Denmark does not gain the control over the area or to maintain the status quo (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 5). The tendency to desecuritize foreign interference means that Greenlandic politics tend to downplay the importance of security and defence issues (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 2). In this case, Greenland wants to signal that it is safe to invest in Greenland and it does not constitute a security issue to do so.

The question is how the Chinese interest should be dealt with. One problem related to large-scale Chinese investment in Greenland is the close ties between Chinese investments and the Chinese political system. Chinese investments could increase Chinese political interference in Greenland (DDIS, 2019, p. 17). Even though China is very interested in strengthening cooperation, investing in Greenlandic, and nursing its relationship with the Greenlandic government, China is wary of interfering in the complex relation between Greenland and Denmark, and will not interfere in the question of independence. Therefore, China has said it will seek support for their activities in Greenland from the Danish government (Turnowsky, 2019). Nevertheless, the Arctic and Greenland are high on the Chinese political agenda and an important element of the BRI. So, this

cautiousness might change in the future. When Denmark makes economics a security matter as was seen with both Chinese investment attempts, the issue falls under Danish sovereignty. This is due to a latent fear that Chinese investments in Greenland are not just focused on economic interests but that the investments could be dual-use, which means that China will possibly gain military footing in Greenland (DDIS, 2019, p. 17). In this way, it becomes a sovereignty game, and Danish securitisation stands in the way of an independent Greenland because the path towards independence is based on developing the economy. This internal division within the KoD is an aggravating point of departure for the KoD, especially as the next Greenlandic step seems to be independence.

There is no clear division between what constitutes a matter of foreign policy and what is an economic policy, which has proven to be problematic in the Danish-Greenlandic relationship (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 5). According to the Self-Government Act, the Greenlandic economy falls under Greenlandic authority, but not when Denmark transforms an economic issue into a security issue. Mistrust and division are created in the KoD when Denmark behaves like a postcolonial power, such as when it did not involve the Greenlandic government in the decision to reopen Grønneidal, even though there had been Greenlandic attempts to attract Chinese investments to Greenland to bolster its economy (Matzen, 2017).

In 2013 Denmark supported China having observer status in the AC. Today, it is more questionable which role China should play concerning the KoD. In the current strategy, China is only mentioned three times in the 58-page-long document (The Kingdom of Denmark, 2011). This signals how much the environment in the Arctic region has changed, and there is good reason for the KoD to be wary of letting China fulfil its interest in Greenland. Due to China's long-term plan for the Arctic region and Greenland, there is a strong need to counter these challenges together and to incorporate the underlying Chinese interests into the KoD's new Arctic strategy. Based on the Sri Lankan example, Greenland should take into account the possible consequences of Chinese involvement in Greenland. The formal Chinese document and statements only reveal the benign aspects of China's real intentions (Breum, 2018). A deal on Chinese investments very likely means a deal with the Chinese political system, which would mean Greenland would end up being dependent on a new country. As seen in Africa, it started with Chinese businessmen and ended up with Chinese forces protecting Chinese interests. China will likely take the same approach in Greenland. But from a

Greenlandic perspective, it seems that the economic gain of Chinese investments outweighs the political consequences. The Chinese investments could mean an independent future, but a deal with China could also mean ending up in a debt trap. The Greenlandic desecuritisation of foreign interference, independent or not, could prove fatal because of the increased great power tensions around Greenland. Nonetheless, it is very much in line with the idea of AE to pursue desecuritisation as part of governance (Jacobsen & Strandsbjerg, 2017, p. 15). But AE has come to an end, so for Greenland to protect itself, it should instead look at the harsh realities of a possible Chinese exploitation of Greenland and an unhealthy dependent relationship that only benefits China.

It seems that the US increasingly reacting to the increased Chinese interest in Greenland on its own by interfering directly in Greenland. Recently, the US has taken on the role of an economic sponsor of Greenland in order to gain more influence due to the great power tensions (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 9). This could weaken the Danish ambition to remain a ‘major Arctic power’ (Breum, 2018, p. 57). The offer on Greenland was an example of this, where the Greenlandic PM Kim Nielsen said no to the sale of Greenland to the US but welcomed investments and closer diplomatic ties. Likewise, the Greenlandic politician Pele Broberg said that *‘the U.S. offer should be taken seriously as a way of crowding out the current Danish block-grant’* (Rasmussen, 2019, p. 2). This is a sign that Greenland is aware of its value, and Greenland has also been more outspoken about its value for Denmark, which the Greenlandic FM Ane Lone Bagger articulated by saying that *‘It is us with the Greenland Card’* in relation to the development of the coming Arctic strategy (Breum, 2020). The increased foreign interference means a renewed value of the Greenland Card that could be exchanged to tangible advantages for the Greenlanders. But from a Danish perspective, the foreign interference are worrying because the KoD’s current Arctic strategy had exercising national sovereignty as a top priority (Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011– 2020, p. 13). In this way, Denmark has especially been let down by the US, and the aid package has been seen by some politicians as an attempt to undermine Danish sovereignty in Greenland.

This situation creates a disjunction between Denmark and Greenland, where the two parts are working with different hopes for the future. To use the KoD position better, it must break down these differing visions to play the Greenland Card better, so neither the Chinese nor the US can take advantage of the internal division in Greenland (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017). The development of

the coming Arctic strategy has great potential to make sure that both Denmark and Greenland get something out of the relationship. With the Ilulissat Declaration, the KoD showed what is possible when Denmark and Greenland stand united and engage in Arctic diplomacy. The increased great power tensions puts extra pressure on the KoD, which requires an open and honest discussion on how both parties can benefit from the current situation in the Arctic region, independence dreams or not (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017). It is not only in Greenland's interests that the realm exists; it is also in the Danish interest due to the fact that Denmark would be a lot smaller and have much less influence if Greenland were not in the KoD. Both parties benefit from the cooperation, and both parties will lose if the realm is dissolved. This is important to acknowledge in the new strategy. Vice versa, the realm can only remain unchanged, if both parties wish it to. Here, the KoD's divided hopes for the future work against countering the challenges it faces in the best way possible.

A power vacuum?

With an increased Greenlandic wish for independence and the process of writing the Greenlandic constitution, the scenario of an independent Greenland should be taken into considerations in the coming Arctic strategy. Here, a challenging issue is the defence of Greenland because these expenses are not factored into the financial cost of independence (Breum, 2018, p. 122). According to the findings of the analysis, foreign interference in Greenland will indisputably increase with Greenlandic independence, which will need quite expensive military equipment to protect Greenland's borders. Some say that Greenland will never be able to afford this equipment (Breum, 2018, p. 123). If Greenland cannot finance its defence, and without the right capabilities to enforce sovereignty over the island, a power vacuum will emerge, leading to even more competition in the Arctic region (Breum, 2018, p. 44). This power vacuum will most likely be filled again by one of the great powers. China, Russia, and the US will be keeping a close eye on what happens in Greenland and to an even greater extent use their interference to prevent Greenland from inclining too much towards one side.

Currently, Greenland's membership of the KoD works as an umbrella of protection against too much interference from the great powers. It could be argued that an independent Greenland would be a geopolitical hazard for Greenland. With the Greenlandic tendency to desecuritize foreign interference, the way to independence will focus less on the security aspects of the interference and more on the economic potential. The Greenlandic Minister of Finance Vittus Qujaukitsoq

articulated this desecuritisation of defence saying, *'The Danish defense today is not the actual defense of Greenland. Should there arise a real threat to our country from hostile powers, it is defended by the United States. It is the reality all know but nobody discusses'* (Breum, 2018, p. 124). Since WW2, the US and Greenland have been in a close military alliance. Perhaps closer than Denmark and Greenland. Therefore, Qujaukitsoq argues that the real protector of Greenland is the US (Breum, 2018, p. 125). It is very likely that this military alliance could continue when or if Greenland becomes independent because of the strategic importance Greenland constitutes to the US. Thus, the Danish military presence in Greenland could quickly be replaced by US forces. The alternative could be that NATO shares the protection of the enormous island. However, this does not include the civil tasks such as fishery control, search and rescue, transport of patients, and help in disasters that are managed and paid for by the Danish Defence (Breum, 2018, p. 122 ; Rasmussen, 2019, p. 2).

Lately, the US has furthered its position as the preferred partner to Greenland, which could very likely be prompted by fears of a power vacuum. With the aid package, the US seeks a closer partnership directly with Greenland, and not the KoD as a whole. This action crossed an invisible line of the Defence agreement from 1951 stating that the US should respect the Danish regulations involving the Greenlandic population and the internal Greenlandic administration (Taagholt & Hansen, 1999, p. 24). Since 1951, there has been a shared understanding that US presence in Greenland should be separate from civil Greenland as far as possible. This understanding was upheld until the announcement of the aid package. Since Seward's bid on Greenland in 1867, the US has been interested in taking control over Greenland. US' bid on Greenland in 2019 explicitly underlined that this interest is still in place. To fill a possible power vacuum, the US is now underlining the leasing of the sovereignty of Greenland as was done in Kaufmann's defence agreement. By leasing the sovereignty of Greenland, the US does not violate Danish sovereignty as such, although several Danish politicians have articulated exactly this. In this way, formal sovereignty is still Danish, but it might increasingly be the US who controls the territory in practice (Goddard, 2019). This is due to the US strategic narrative on Greenland as essential for national security and that Denmark is not capable of managing this on behalf of the US. The US is very aware of the Chinese interest in Greenland and the money that China has to realize these interests with. From a US perspective, the worst-case scenario would be a Chinese military presence in Greenland, if the investments are for dual-use. For now, it seems that China accepts the current

separation of power around Greenland. But according to the strategic narrative, China will probably insist that the Arctic region is a trans-regional issue and demand to play a role in or around Greenland. Whether the competitor is Russia or China, history has shown that the US' interest in Greenland is persistent, and history has underlined that the US will not tolerate any other actor than Denmark in Greenland, so the US will very likely be the one to fill the power vacuum in Greenland.

The interest in Greenland has caught the three actors in a vicious circle, meaning that every time one shows interest, the others will react. From the history and the Russian strategic narratives, it is very likely that Russia will increase its focus in the same moment that Greenland breaks away from Denmark. Generally, Russia is interested in secession movements as a way to cause division, especially in the Western world (Manney, 2017). If Greenland gets independence and at the same time is less influenced by the West and NATO, it would benefit Russia. This could strengthen the Russian position in the Arctic. But this would also mean more room for China in Greenland, whom Russia is cooperating with at the moment, but this could also develop into strategic competition. An example could be that the Chinese BRI undermines Russian control of the NSR (DDIS, 2019, p. 16). One way or another, a possible power vacuum in Greenland will probably lead to further military build-up in the Russian Arctic, because this will be a threat to its role as Arctic leader. Russia has previously been willing to break international law to annex territory, but the annexation of Greenland in the case of a power vacuum seems very unlikely. Russia knows that if it attempted to annex Greenland the US would respond mercilessly because an attack on Greenland would be perceived as an attack on the US and the rest of NATO.

Greenland has become the centre of security politics, which it has not been since the Cold War. This combined with a Greenlandic wish for independence potentially means a further escalation in the Arctic region. Here, the KoD together is responsible for preventing a power vacuum and not creating further tensions in the region in the case of Greenlandic independence (Michaelsen, 2020). Based on the strategic narrative in Greenland, a stronger military presence on Greenland will not be understood as an expression of militarisation, but more as a necessity to prevent further great power tensions in Greenland. It would signal that the KoD or an independent Greenland, in close cooperation with Denmark, is capable of enforcing sovereignty over the strategically important island.

Future research

For future research, it would be relevant to investigate the three case actors in more depth. Each case actor's interference in Greenland could singly constitute a thesis. Further investigation would give a more in-depth understanding of the various powers' interest. It could be especially relevant to investigate how China is dealing with Greenland because this is a relatively new development and therefore there is not that much knowledge on this specific actor yet.

Furthermore, it could be interesting to include an investigation of how the foreign interference influences the Faroe Islands, which the KoD's Arctic strategy also covers. Here, it has been reported that China threatened to cancel a trade deal with the Faroe Islands if it did not agree to use internet networks supplied by Huawei. This is another place where the technological competition between China and the US challenges the KoD (VOA, 2019). It could also be relevant to make a comparative investigation of how other Nordic states are dealing with foreign interference to see if there are observations or initiatives that could contribute to a better outcome of the new Arctic strategy. Here, it could be interesting to investigate how Nordic states could cooperate in the reaction to the great power tension in the Arctic region.

Part IV: The final chapter

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, the thesis makes recommendations to the KoD on how to react to the increased Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland.

- The Danish-Greenlandic relationship should be strengthened so that internal disputes do not weaken its impact. Both Danish and Greenlandic authorities must seek open, respectful, and constructive dialogue and cooperation. This will increase the potential benefits from the foreign interference and it will be easier to face great power tensions as a united front. Therefore, both parties need to clarify what kind of projects that falls into the area of defence and security in order to avoid misunderstandings regarding future investment opportunities.
- The KoD should take an active part in the security policy in the Arctic. It seems that especially Denmark has been marginalising the importance of Greenland. If the KoD wants to have a say among the great powers, there is a need for focused involvement of Greenland. This could be done by initiating a new Ilulissat Declaration on security and defence issues, which could regulate the growing Chinese influence in the Arctic.
- To counter the great power tensions, the new strategy should encompass stated objectives to develop sufficient national capabilities to strengthen the control and influence in the early phases of a potential military crisis in and around Greenland. A priority should be to signal to the US that the KoD is capable of securing Greenland sufficiently. This would be done by having the necessary capacities to detect, identify, and, if required, deny foreign states' activities on Greenlandic territory.
- The approach to Russia should be based on respect for the identified Russian identity feeling. Russia is not particularly interested in Greenland in itself but more as part of their sphere of interest. It is considered that as long the Russian role in the Arctic is acknowledged, Russia will be cooperative. Practical cooperation with Russia will make it possible to deescalate the tensions and avoid possible misunderstandings that could lead to undue escalation. The KoD should be prepared that Russia will very likely try to influence

on Greenlandic matters through active measures if the US tries to obtain more influence in Greenland. This scenario would scare Russia and might lead to intensified acts.

- The approach to China's growing interest in Greenland should be based on the intersection of Chinese investments and the Chinese political system, which means that China's current benign intentions could easily have huge consequences for Greenland and the KoD as a whole. Due to different hopes for the KoD's future, it will be difficult to deal with the Chinese interest without causing misunderstanding and disagreement in the KoD. To be best prepared, the KoD could sign an agreement with China that clearly outlines Chinese possibilities and limitations regarding Greenland.
- The US' new offensive approach to the Arctic, where a certain interest is directed at Greenland, poses new challenges to the KoD. Here the strategy should especially focus on how to handle the increased US antipathy for Russia and China. Here, a new Ilulissat Declaration on security and defence could ease the tensions. Furthermore, if the US keeps seeking involvement in civil Greenlandic matters, there is a need to clarify the US' role once more.
- The cooperation with NATO-partners and Nordic countries in the Arctic should be prioritised and strengthened so that when conflicts in the Arctic are confronted this can be done through a united approach. This could be effective in handling the increased great power tensions and be a fruitful exchange of experiences.
- If Greenland becomes independent within the time frame of the coming Arctic strategy, the best outcome would be independence that combines continued close cooperation with Denmark to avoid a power vacuum and further intensification of the great power competition.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate *how the Kingdom of Denmark should react to the increased Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland in the coming Arctic Strategy.*

With the historical and narrative analysis as a backdrop, the answer to the research question is that the KoD should adapt its strategy to meet a more competitive Arctic. Greenland and the Arctic have regained their importance, which means an end to Arctic Exceptionalism. The coming strategy needs to deal with the Arctic as it is today, not as how the KoD wishes it to be.

From applying history to current events in the analysis, it has been found that the current Chinese, Russian, and US interference in Greenland has similarities to the Cold War, there is military build-up and a confrontation on ideology. Therefore, the tensions could easily be labelled as a Cold War 2.0 interfering with Greenland's security. For a period of years, Arctic Exceptionalism was possible because the great powers were focused elsewhere. But the Arctic never really stopped being a core security location due to its proximity to Russia and the US. Now, the two have returned to their Cold War position of rivals, and China is challenging the US position as the dominant global power by offering a whole set of new playing rules. Greenland's importance is not new but varies according to the dynamics in great power politics. Hence there is a need to reconsider the Arctic as a less peaceful and co-operative region than it is typically portrayed as.

While there was a risk that the use of several approaches could make it difficult to come to a clear conclusion, by triangulating the method of Applied History with the theory of strategic narrative, it has been possible to identify what motivates the foreign interference and it can be concluded that to call the current tensions around Greenland a Cold War 2.0 would be a 'dangerous myth'. Despite similar behaviours, the motivations for the foreign interference today are not the same. The self-proclaimed near-Arctic state China is primarily motivated by the wish to incorporate Greenland into the Belt and Road Initiative by building infrastructure. Therefore, China is expected to keep seeking this interference. China works from a different ideology, but it is not as different as the USSR was to the US. However, as seen from applying history, there is a risk that the investments are intended for dual-use. Here, China could take advantage of the Greenlandic financial need in order to become independent, which could lead to a potential conflict between China and the US in the future due to the Thucydides trap. The Russian interference in Greenland and the military build-up

in the Russian Arctic are mostly defensively focused, intended to protect Russia's status as Arctic leader and uphold the status quo in the region. Therefore, Russia is not directly interested in Greenland but reacts with active measures when the US reaches the threshold of interference that Russia can accept, there shall be expected a reaction. So although even the Russian military build-up is similar to Cold War behaviour, it is not motivated by confronting the US in the Arctic. The US' interference in Greenland is primarily focused on national security due to the location of Greenland; therefore the US has tried to enhance its position and relationship to Greenland time after time. This is a repeating pattern from both WW2 and the Cold War because Greenland works as a forwarded frontline that protects the US homeland. Therefore, it should be expected that every time there is tension in the Arctic, the US will try to strengthen its position in Greenland and the best possible way of doing this would be to own the island. The harsh US critique of both China and Russia could signal a Cold War 2.0, but the competitors do not seem to share the same perception of the current tensions.

It is clear throughout the paper that the diverging Danish and Greenlandic perceptions are a hindrance to the response to the renewed interference. Greenland has a strong wish for independence, which requires foreign interference and foreign capital. On the other side, Denmark has a strong wish to be a major Arctic state, which requires the refusal of foreign interference in Greenland. But Greenlandic independence is the next step; therefore Denmark and Greenland need to find a joint platform from which to react to the increased foreign interference.

The work of this thesis has contributed with a deeper historical, academic, and policy-relevant understanding of how the renewed foreign interference in Greenland is influencing the dynamics in the KoD. Furthermore, the thesis implements a scenario of what is likely to happen when or if Greenland gets independence because this could happen within the timeframe of the coming Arctic strategy.

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Appendix 1:

**STATEMENT OF INTENT ON DEFENSE INVESTMENTS IN
GREENLAND BY**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The U.S. Department of Defense recognizes its long history of mutually beneficial defense cooperation with the Kingdom of Denmark in Greenland. In light of world events, the United States acknowledges the increasing importance of the Arctic region to the global economy and to regional security. In this vein, the United States and the Kingdom of Denmark have shared interests in strengthening security, improving situational awareness, and maintaining low-tension in the region. This Statement of Intent lays out principles for investments in Greenland to enhance U.S. military operational flexibility and situational awareness in order to address the changing security environment in the Arctic. In light of this development and in an effort to strengthen U.S. and NATO capabilities, the U.S. Department of Defense intends to pursue potential strategic investments vigorously, including investments that may serve dual military and civilian purposes. For example, the U.S. Department of Defense intends to analyze and, where appropriate, strategically invest in projects related to the airport infrastructure in Greenland, including projects that may have dual civil and military benefits. These investments would seek to enhance U.S. and NATO capabilities in the North Atlantic region and would benefit the United States, the Kingdom of Denmark, and the people of Greenland.

This Statement of Intent is not a legally binding commitment under international or national law and does not substitute for or invalidate any existing defense agreements, arrangements, or memoranda of understanding.

SIGNED at Thule Air Base this 16 day in September.

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John R. ...", is written above a horizontal line.

Appendix 2:

Siinnartitaanermut, Kultureqanermut, Kageeqanermut Nunarsulu Allanut
Naalakkersuisoq
Naalakkersuisoq for Uddannelse, Kultur, Kirke og Lideningsanliggender
Minister of Education, Culture, Church and Foreign Affairs

NAALAKKERSUISUT
GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND



Tom Cotton
United States Senator from Arkansas

Dear Senator Cotton,

On behalf of the government of Greenland I want to express appreciation for supporting of our country in the fight for a better future. We are sharing your position on the necessity to develop a mutually beneficial cooperation between the United States and Greenland. Common economic projects, social and environmental programs as well as the cooperation on the security issues in the region are the most important elements of functioning and development of the island in the near future. Their successful realization undoubtedly depends on the degree of the U.S. and Greenland integration. Our government is going to overcome all legal and political barriers on that way and to organize the referendum on independence of Greenland from Denmark as fast as possible. Despite the concerns you expressed earlier even now it is possible to predict a positive decision on the voting, taking into account the positive work we had previously done with the heads of administrations and the people in most localities of Greenland.

Besides that, we have considered the U.S. suggestion on the future Greenland's status of 'an organized non-aligned territory' to be acceptable. Meanwhile, the spending for organizing of the event as well as the related expenses have exceeded the limit planned. Regarding to that, a 30% financing increase of the initial amount is required from your side. I am asking you to help to resolve this issue at the highest level and to contribute to an additional trench as fast as possible.

We rely on your understanding and full assistance.
Faithfully yours,


Ane Lone Bagger

23-10-2019
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