



Greenland Geopolitics: Globalisation and Geopolitics in the New North

Background Paper for the Committee for Greenlandic Mineral Resources
to the Benefit of Society

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Findings

The purpose of this paper is to describe and define the parameters for discussing the possible security consequences of exploiting Greenland's mineral wealth. As such, the paper is to serve as an independent input into the joint report produced by the Joint Commission. Given that what constitute a security issue has no clear-cut legal definition in the constitutional law of the Kingdom of Denmark and remains a highly controversial political issue, this paper seeks to describe the frame-work for discussing security, strategy and geopolitical issues relating to Greenland rather than define the content of that framework.

The paper makes a number of key findings that may prove of interest for the work of the Joint Committee. These are:

- Greenland remains vital to the United States' security and any change in the island's status and the use of its strategic minerals will depend on American access and capacity for access denial.
- On its own, Greenland remains below the 'military horizon' and will have to develop non-conventional means to defend its sovereignty, perform Search and Rescue operations and more. Security guarantees from the United States, NATO-membership is possible solutions to this, but will be costly and by no means be unproblematic.
- Greenland's resources, particular rare earth element and uranium, do *not* have an inherent strategic value. The West remains largely satisfied with being supplied with critical and strategic raw materials by the world market. To the extent that the United States has been concerned about the supply of rare earth this issue has being linked to US domestic politics and solved on US soil.
- In spite of uranium's potential use in nuclear weapons, the real issue behind the occasionally heated debate on the issue between Nuuk and Copenhagen was *not* security narrowly defined, but the Naalakkersuisut's scope and ability to manage its own affairs within the self-rule arrangement.
- Greenland's minerals constitute a symbolic as well as economic bridge between Greenland of the past and a future independent nation. Any discussion about the island's mineral wealth is therefore by its very nature (geo)political. This means that the utilisation of resources is not only linked to the authoritative distribution of wealth in society, but part of the very definition of society and authority in Greenland.

Introduction

Global warming and global demand for resources are transforming the Arctic region to the extent that some is referring the New North.¹ There has been widespread speculation on the geopolitical consequences of this transformation. The issue of border conflicts in the disputed parts of the Arctic Sea, Russian rearmament of its Northern Fleet, Canadian-American disputes on the status of the North West Passage, Chinese engagement in the region and demands for more independence from the Inuit in Canada and Greenland are just some of the factors generating alarmist headlines in new papers and more cautioned concerns in foreign ministries. The case of Greenland further demonstrates that in the New North two types of geopolitics interact and that they interact in a global context. As a milder climate and global demand on resources make extracting Greenland's abundant natural resources more feasible, the geopolitics of mining defines the political future of Greenland and its eventual independence from the Kingdom of Denmark. Thus political geography translates to geopolitics defined in terms of global spaces of security. The prospect of revenues from mining gives Greenland political choice, whereas geopolitical, security concerns offers Greenland far fewer choices. Greenland neither has the population and the government budget to field military forces in the traditional sense of the term; therefore the only option for Greenland is to cooperate with an outside power to ensure the island's security.

These developments take place in the context of global warming, global resource markets, global competition between China and the United States, thus the geopolitics of the New North is global. Damien Degeorges points out that this is a new experience for Greenland and Denmark, an experience which the more traditional geopolitical dealing the United States have not prepared the actors of the Kingdom.²

Greenland is a part of the Kingdom of Denmark (which consists of Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland). The island has been a Danish colony since the 18th century, but during the 20th century the Inuit has gradually gained greater autonomy, which has culminated in the 2009 when a Self-Rule Act made Greenland an autonomous part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Even if Greenland has gained greater formal independence from Copenhagen, it remains heavily depended on Danish subsidies. The Self-Rule Act stipulated a way to escape this dependency with the possibility for true independence as a sovereign nation. As the Greenlandic government would be able to generate its own revenues, the Danish contribution to the state finances would gradually be reduced. This formula was formulated on the promise of being able to extract resources on land and at sea. This leaves Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark as such, with

geopolitical challenges on two levels. The way resources extraction shape relations between Nuuk and Copenhagen as well as the way Greenland's strategic space is being transformed. The two levels interact and the main challenge for the Kingdom in the years to come is how to manage that interaction.

This paper begins by outlining the two notions of geopolitics on the background of a reading of geopolitics as a way to come to terms with globalisation. Second, the paper focus on Greenland's geopolitics during the Cold War, this leads to a discussion of Greenland's security options in the event of independence from Denmark. Thirdly, the paper turns to geopolitics in the sense of the politics of resources demonstrating how the politics of mining and the politics of independence play closely together in the case of Greenland. This leads to a discussion of how the two types of geopolitics relates to one another, for example when it comes to the extraction of so-called strategic resources.

One Globalisation and Two Geopolitics

Geopolitics has two distinct meanings with a specific body of knowledge associated with each. First, geopolitics is the term for how certain security concerns go with a specific territory. In Ó Tuathail and Agnew's formulation geopolitics is 'a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft "spatialize" international politics in such a way as to represent it as a "world" characterized by particular types of places, peoples and dramas. In our understanding, the study of geopolitics is the study of the spatialization of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states.'³ This spatialization can easily be reduced to ways of reading the map with little relation to what is actually on it. The spaces created in geopolitical discourse are much more than that, however. The allure of geopolitics rests on the fact that geopolitical discourse is about the opportunities and constraints offered by geography as much as the way these opportunities and constraints are politically articulated. If one can be excused the pun, geopolitics describes how governments are caught between a rock and a hard place. The rock being the resources of the government's territory and the hard place being the international system. When Sir Halford Mackinder defined the Asian landmass as the 'pivot area' he defined a certain *space* imbued with a very specific meaning. In effect, Mackinder pointed to a part of the map and said that the power of the British Empire was thus defined in a certain way and put into the context of a grand historical drama. Since the geopolitical space defined by Mackinder and the geographical place coincided, and this was obviously no coincidence, with the territory of Russia, Russia was perceived in the spatial context of competing world empires. Mackinder's

key insight, however, was the realisation that transport technologies transformed the nature of *place* in the 'heartland'. The railway allowed Russia, and the United States, to utilise landlocked resources in unprecedented ways. For people living in Siberia or the Mid-West place was put in a new spatial context. Their experience were as real as Mackinder's discourse and both should be regard as a part of the same geopolitical practice that developed by the turn of the 19th century. The way in which the development within a particular geographical place is put in to a context of global space is at the heart of the second notion of geopolitics

Second, geopolitics (or political geography) may refer to the way in which the natural resources associated with a certain place redefines the nature of social space when extracted by, for example, mining. John Agnew defines political geography as the study of spaces of power. 'This power,' Agnew writes, 'is manifested geographically in the definition of boundaries between states or other political-territorial units, in the control exerted by powerful states and empires over less powerful ones, and in the material and emotional connections people make between themselves and they inhabit, thus limiting the access of others to them.' The first space Agnew describes is the power political space of Mackinder, whereas the second part of his definition of political geography is equally political, but the relation between people and place rather than between states defines the space of politics and power. This means a focus on socio-economic factors rather than politico-military. As Agnew indicates a full measure of a political geographical situation includes both; yet, for analytical purposes they can be treated separately.⁴ Again, the distinction between space and place demonstrates the link between discourse and practice. From the perspective of place, the resources in a particular territory can be catalogued and defined in terms of geographical scale, but as John Agnew points out in an increasing global world there rarely is 'a single scale at which total explanation can be found.'⁵ Economic utility of certain resources in a certain territory, however, is defined by a number of spatial factors. Coal would have been of very little value until the 19th century, but at that point in time industrialisation created a global demand on coal. Not only the value of the minerals in a certain place might vary with spatial context, the values by which they are extracted have changed profoundly. These days, corporate social responsibility and environmental protection of the surrounding places guide mining to an extent hitherto unknown.

Geopolitics is often presented as a discourse of the powerful, used to carve up the rest of the world.⁶ A view epitomised in Harold Nicolson's description of how the found Wilson, Lloyd Georg and Clemenceau crowded over maps with pen in hand at the Paris Peace Conference.⁷ While this is certain true of the way geopolitical discourse has been used, theories of geopolitics

can in many ways been regarded as a wish to escape a narrow national focus on the world, or perhaps rather to regard one's nation in a global context. Geopolitics has always been first and foremost an invitation to look hard at the map. 'Geopolitics provides a way of looking at the world,' Klaus Dobbs notes.⁸ John Winant argued that Mackinder 'was the first to provide us with a global concept of the world.'⁹ Mackinder described a globalised world where events could no longer be regarded in isolation, but would 'sharply re-echoed from the far side of the world.'¹⁰ The map Mackinder presented was thus supposed to demonstrate the way a global space was replacing regional places with profound consequences. 'From the present time forth,' Mackinder argued, 'we shall again have to deal with a closed political system, and none the less that it will be one of world-wide scope.'¹¹ Geopolitics as a way to come to terms with globalisation was also a crucial part of Klaus Haushofer's defence of German geopolitics which Haushofer justified as a way to educate the German youth in the 'capability to think in terms of wide space (in continents!) and the knowledge of the living conditions of others.'¹² Even if Haushofer tried to obscure the distinction between drawing and redrawing the map, he nonetheless pointed to the way geopolitics is a paradigm of understanding the way global space gives a particular place a special meaning. This is true today when Simon Dalby argues that 'thinking about global security seriously is precisely a matter of thinking through these connections and understanding the consequences of actions in one place on people elsewhere.'¹³

Focusing on a particular place, like Greenland, a geopolitical perspective offers a possibility for describing the spatial conditions and the connection between the island in the High North and the rest of the global system. From this perspective one is mostly focused on the first notion of geopolitics. Framed this way the question is how the international system and the security concerns that follows are internalised in the politics of the community living in that place on the map. This only describes a part of spatial use to which Greenlandic place has been and will be put. Therefore, one also needs to pose a question in framework of the second notion of geopolitics. Framed this way one is concerned with how the mining of raw materials has social and economic externalities which raises political concerns. Where the first notion of geopolitics defines limits for political choice of the territory's government and explains the 'legitimate' concerns of outside powers, the second notion of geopolitics is about how new resources create new opportunities for communities hitherto forced to live on a smaller resource base. Most of the time these two notions of geopolitics live separate lives, as they are the concern of different classes of politicians (central government vs. local government, ministry of foreign affairs vs. ministry of minerals and mining) and subject of different academic

literatures (Strategic Studies vs. Geology). In the case of Greenland, the two notions of geopolitics are increasingly intertwined. Understanding the way in which these two notions of geopolitics constitutes different modes of policy and how these modes are informing one another is a crucial first step if one wants to unpack the debate on security in the Kingdom of Denmark. For this reason the case of Greenland offers a site for studying globalisation in the context of geopolitics. The Arctic is opening in the way Asia and North American was opening in Mackinder's time.

Airstrip North

If Britain was Airstrip One in George Orwell's sardonic description of the geopolitical realities of an American dominated military alliance during the early Cold War,¹⁴ then it would not be wholly inappropriate to describe Greenland during the Cold War as 'Airstrip North'. Greenland controls the North Eastern approaches to the North American continent. This mattered little in military terms before the mid-20th century when aircraft technology made Greenland an important stepping stone between Europe and America. As Halford Mackinder noted in *Foreign Affairs* in 1942, 'the Arctic shore is no longer inaccessible in the absolute sense that held until a few years ago.'¹⁵ One might term this the beginning of the globalisation of Greenland, in the sense that the territory became a more integrated part of the international system. Strategic globality¹⁶ arrived in Greenland with the Second World War, but technology was such that Greenland's integration in the international system depended on the 'infrastructural power'¹⁷ of a great power to be integrated in the international system and thus questions of national security provided a rationale for spending that kind of resources so far away, thus integration took place on military terms.

During the Second World War the United States was able to secure basing rights on Greenland from the Danish ambassador in Washington who prudently ignored his brief from Copenhagen which at that time was under Germany occupation (1940-45).¹⁸ The Danish governors of the two administrative districts on Greenland tried to enforce Danish sovereignty by establishing the Northeast Greenland Sledge Patrol which had various encounters with Germans trying to set up a weather station on the East Coast.¹⁹ When the Americans troops arrived in force in 1941 the island was firmly secured for the allies, and the US was able to transfer planes from the continental United States to Britain via Narsarsuaq in Southern Greenland.²⁰

Greenland had thus become a geopolitical important place because of the advent of military avionics and because the territory offered a unique observation platform for the weather systems which would later determine weather conditions in Europe. It was thus an allied weather station in Greenland which provided the weather report which made General Eisenhower give the order for D-Day in June 1944. This let the US Joint Chief of Staff to conclude in post-war basing studies that the United States needed military bases on Greenland to be included in a number of forward bases in the North Atlantic area to secure the Western Hemisphere.²¹ 'A surprise attack could readily come from across the roof of the world,' General Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Force, wrote in *National Geographic* in 1946, 'unless we were in possession of the adequate airbases outflanking such of route of approach.'²² From 1947, US military began implementing these plans for a 'perimeter defence in depth' which also allowed for the offensive use of US bombers in strikes on the Soviet Union.²³ The US long-range bombers needed Greenland as a place for refuelling and emergency landing, as the WW2-bombers had, because Greenland was on the shortest way to Soviet territory. Thus technology and geography worked together in constructing a perimeter of military space; a space in which Greenland became ever more important to the United States. As noted in a letter from the American consulate in Nuuk to State Department in 1947, 'we need Thule.'²⁴ In June 1951, the US navy used 120 ships to transport 12,000 men and 300,000 tons of cargo from Norfolk, VA, to Thule for the construction of Thule Airbase.²⁵ In 1950, the United States had 920 troops in Greenland; in 1957, following the treaty; this was increased to 6,811 troops, primarily from the US Air Force which flew B-36 strategic bombers out of Thule.²⁶ These bombers were part of the US North Eastern Air Command that operated out of Labrador, Newfoundland and Greenland. In geopolitical terms, Greenland was organised as part of the North American defence space that included Canada and Greenland into the US forward defence perimeter.

Greenland thus became an integrated part of the North American defence architecture. The United States had very ambitious programmes for the military utilisation of Greenland, including projects like Camp Century on the ice cap, which from 1960 to 1963 was heated by its very own nuclear reactor.²⁷ These ambitions did not include the annexation of Greenland, however. The 1941 treaty was updated in 1951 and provided a basis for a continued US military presence. The post-war government in Copenhagen would have preferred the withdrawal of the US troops, but when the Danish government presented that wish to the United States, Secretary of State Byrnes suggested that the best outcome would be for the United States to buy Greenland from Denmark. Decision-makers in Copenhagen had perceived Greenland as part of a national

Danish space, which were to be re-established after German occupation, and the US offer was rejected.²⁸ In 1948, an agreement was reached which allowed for a continued US presence on the island. In 1951, US rearmament in the wake of the outbreak of war in Korea led to a hastily renegotiated treaty which gave the United States full access to Greenland for military purposes.²⁹

From a US perspective Danish sovereignty over Greenland actually served a number of purposes. First, Danish sovereignty over Greenland relieved Canada from a sense of encirclement which made it easier for Washington to deal with Ottawa on High North issues. In 1940, the Canadian and American governments had a brief but serious disagreement about what to do about Greenland when the German invasion took Denmark out of the picture.³⁰ Keeping Denmark in the picture after the Second World War maintained stability. Second, the arrangement made it possible for the United States to focus on exploiting the military advantages of the territory, but left it to Denmark to deal with the people. This arrangement made it possible for the United States to scale its presence after military needs without too much consideration of the impact on the local economy etc. This was made possible by the size and limited population of Greenland which created distance between the Americans and the local inhabitants. The Danish government preferred it that way, and clause VI of the bases agreement of 1951 stressed the need to keep contact between US service personnel and the civilian population at an absolute minimum (this clause was in effect until 1986).³¹ From this perspective it is quite symbolic that the small settlement of Thule was removed to make way for Thule Airbase and the local population resettled 100 km North in Qaanaaq. To the Americans on the Airbase Greenland was a geopolitical entity, part of the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union, the Danes and the Inuit saw Greenland in an entirely different perspective as a home and a place to work. Thus, one might say that the two very different Greenlands existed in the imagination of the Americans, the Danes and the Inuit. This to the extent that the Danish Prime Minister in a letter in 1957 specifically asked the US ambassador in Copenhagen not to be informed of the potential deployment of American nuclear armaments to Greenland.³² When Copenhagen deviated from this course and tried to integrate the geopolitical spaces of the Kingdom in policies not approved by Washington, Danish politicians were firmly told to stay put. After having presented a plan for a nuclear disarmament initiative for the Nordic countries, including Greenland, at the UN General Assembly in 1960, the Danish foreign minister Jens Otto Krag stopped by Washington and in a meeting at the White House President Eisenhower resurrected the idea that the United States should buy Greenland from Denmark. Minister Krag

got the hint and hastily buried the disarmament plan, thus confirming US control with Greenland's geopolitics.³³

This separation of the civilian and the military space in Greenland could not conceal the fact that from a Danish perspective the increased geopolitical importance of Greenland made the island more central to Danish security policy. The wish to keep Greenland Danish was thus an important element in the Danish decision to join NATO in 1949 and an important part of why the United States wanted Denmark to join. 'United States forces continue to hold the defence bases we have established on Greenland,' asserted the US National Security Council in 1948, 'if Denmark accedes to any defence agreement for the North Atlantic area our continued rights will be implicit.'³⁴ With Denmark formally part of the Western alliance, US access to Greenland was secured at the same time as Denmark's claim to the territory had to be given the due consideration which the State Department had to give the claims of an ally. Furthermore, NATO provided a framework within which to negotiate the conditions under which the US forces were to operate in Greenland, the US forces were thus operating on a standard Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).

In Copenhagen, Greenland was throughout the Cold War referred to as a 'card' to be played when the question of Denmark's contribution to the Atlantic alliance was under discussion.³⁵ It may be that Denmark did not pay its due to hold the front in Europe, but the Kingdom did provide a crucial geopolitical element of the Northern front. The Americans noted this. A US report on Denmark from 1959 thus noted that 'there is no doubt that Denmark prizes and values its contribution to the defense of the West and counts on its Greenland contribution, which it makes completely free, as a plus item in its total defence contribution.'³⁶ The fact that this 'plus item' was described as a card was rather revealing in the sense that having been played the issue was in a manner of speaking out of the hands of the Danish government. Greenland was a geopolitical resource given to the Americans. Copenhagen had little further interest in or influence on how the United States utilised that resource

When Denmark in the 1950s and 1960s embarked on a large-scale development program for Greenland this was done with little or no consideration of its geopolitical implications. Greenland's globalisation was a partial and sector specific placing the island as a part of a North American security space, while the Greenland economy was geared at exporting fish and minerals to Denmark and Europe rather than to North American markets. Even in 2010, Greenland exported for 1.9 Billion DKK to Denmark, but only for 560,000 DKK to North

America.³⁷ The US might have been the geopolitical metropolitan centre to Greenland, but Copenhagen remained the economic and political metropolis.

The military nature of American involvement in Greenland meant that technological change dictated a draw-down of US forces in 1960 when the introduction of long-range bombers meant the Strategic Air Command no longer needed forward bases. Instead, a Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) radar was installed at Thule in 1961 which meant that the base reached its maximum in terms of 10,000 personnel – three times as many as was living in Nuuk at the time.³⁸ The US military presence was further reduced by the end of the 1960s when the Air Force withdrew fighters thereby reducing the number of personnel to a third. The base's mission thus shifted from Air Force operations to surveillance. The radar array was continually updated and in 1982 Thule became an Air Force Space Command base.³⁹ This saved the US taxpayer money, but meant that the Danish tax-payer had to pay more because Denmark had to fill in for departing US forces. At this point the separation between Geopolitical Greenland and Danish Greenland began to erode.

The military remains a Danish responsibility after the 2009 self-rule legislation. The Danish military presence in the Arctic is of a different nature than the American one, however. The Danish military presence relates to the internal affairs of the territory rather than to the geopolitical position of Greenland. The United States military is stationed in Greenland for purely geopolitical reasons, and the bulk of the US forces left when these concerns could be dealt with differently and at lower cost. The Danish military presence was and has remained primarily a naval presence. The Royal Danish Navy is also the national coast guard and naval operations in the Arctic were primarily coast guard operations like Search and Rescue (SAR) and fishing inspection. Apart from this the air force operated a few platforms for logistics and surveillance and the army operate the SIRIUS PATROL - a ranger unit which patrols the Northern territories by sled. The increasingly independent-minded government in Nuuk has been making demands of the Danish military in ways which would never have been done of the US military. With prospect of more traffic in the territorial waters and the need to more inspections following from prospecting etc. the call from greater resources have been heard from the military⁴⁰ and politicians in Greenland, like the Greenlandic MP Sara Olsvig who argued that an increased defence presence was needed because 'the minerals – including radioactive material – must be secured'.⁴¹ 'Greenland is a part of the Kingdom which will play an important global role in the future,' defence minister Nick Hækkerup noted in 2012. Minister Hækkerup

added that he believed operations in the Arctic would be 'one of the areas where we will use more money in years to come'.⁴²

Greenland below the military horizon

Even if Greenland is no longer Airstrip North the island remains geopolitically important to the United States. The United States' interest in Greenland was reconfirmed with the bases agreement of 2005 which made the government in Nuuk a party to the agreement in the sense that it was signed by 'the Kingdom of Denmark, including the government of Greenland'.⁴³ According to *Wikileaks*, the then US ambassador in Copenhagen argued that

Greenland is on a clear track toward independence, which could come more quickly than most outside the Kingdom of Denmark realize ... With Greenlandic independence glinting on the horizon, the U.S. has a unique opportunity to shape the circumstances in which an independent nation may emerge. We have real security and growing economic interests in Greenland, for which existing Joint and Permanent Committee mechanisms (described reftel A) may no longer be sufficient. American commercial investments, our continuing strategic military presence, and new high-level scientific and political interest in Greenland argue for establishing a small and seasonal American Presence Post in Greenland's capital as soon as practicable.⁴⁴

Even if the cable quite obviously is a plea for permission to open an office in Nuuk, the Ambassador does so, on the basis of a perception shared by the State Department: Greenland is important for geopolitical reasons that are separate from and perhaps even more important than the United States' relations to Denmark. Because of constitutional changes in Denmark and the following greater independence for Greenland the United States can no longer ignore the internal politics of Greenland, but on the other hand politicians in Inatsisartut (the Parliament of Greenland) who aspire to independence will have to think hard about relations to the United States. Thus it was probably no coincidence that the Naalakkersuisut (the government of Greenland) was determined to use its right to open offices at Danish embassies to open an office in Washington in 2014.⁴⁵ According to paragraph 15 of the Self-Rule bill such offices can only deal with issues of which the Greenlandic government is in control. The stated objective of the Naalakkersuisut was thus to deepen economic and research cooperation with the United States,

but, interestingly, to do so in 'light of the United States' security interests in Greenland'.⁴⁶ The Naalakkersuisut thus clearly saw engagement with the United States in geopolitical terms.

The Greenlanders were clearly aware that their territory's geopolitical significance is closely related to the 'New North.' In 2009, President George Bush issued a National Security Presidential Directive which stated the American strategic interest in the region:

The United States has broad and fundamental national security interests in the Arctic region and is prepared to operate either independently or in conjunction with other states to safeguard these interests. These interests include such matters as missile defense and early warning; deployment of sea and air systems for strategic sealift, strategic deterrence, maritime presence, and maritime security operations; and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight.⁴⁷

It follows from this statement that the United States' paramount interest in Greenland remains access for US forces and the capability to deny access to forces deemed detrimental for US security. The 2010 *Quadrennial Defence Review* (QDR), which defines the Department of Defence's strategic objectives, emphasises the continued US focus access and awareness in the region arguing that 'special attention is required to develop domain awareness tools for the Arctic approaches as well'.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the 2010 QDR introduced the 'global commons' as a US strategic priority. Global commons include the oceans and the access to resources and the concept thus emphasized the US focus on access as a guiding strategy in a global security environment.⁴⁹ Washington is increasingly focusing on Asia,⁵⁰ and as the ice of the Arctic Ocean melts and allows transit to Asia, Greenland's position on the approaches to North America will become more important. In the Arctic, the United States has particularly focused on the role of access in the on-going discussion with Canada on whether the North West Passage constitutes international waters or is Canadian waters. The focus on access applies to Greenland as well and the increased access of other powers – civilian or military – to the area increases the United States need for 'awareness tools'. This approach was underscored in the Obama administration's National Strategy for the Arctic Region which 'intended to position the United States to respond effectively to challenges and emerging opportunities arising from significant increases in Arctic activity'.⁵¹ The need to control the Arctic approaches is as pronounced today in American strategy as it was in the 1950s, even if climate and technology has changed the nature of that presence.

A key interest of the United States in Greenland will be the stability that allows access and which prevents Greenland from being a problem in Canada-US relations. As Natalia Loukacheva notes, the most important security relationship between the Inuit in Nunavut and Greenland is not with Ottawa or Copenhagen but with Washington.⁵² For Canada and Denmark the risk of decoupling is part of the geopolitics of the Arctic. Perhaps one reason why the State Department did not grant the ambassador his wish for an office in Nuuk was that the United States might be more interested in Greenland remaining a part of the Kingdom of Denmark, if Greenland independence would create problems within the Canadian federation, this would lead to demands for more independence to Nunavut. The fact that military forces in the Arctic have come from the outside has made it obvious for the Inuit to focus on human security concerns,⁵³ the fact that military forces has been non-indigenous have reflected the fact that the areas have been governed from the outside and with a geopolitical importance that attracted foreign forces. The ambition of independence puts these geopolitical questions on Greenland's political agenda for the first time. The geopolitics of Greenland dictates that Greenland can only be a sovereign, independent country by providing for stability and control over its own territory in a way that ensures the United States of access and that the access of potentially hostile powers can be confidently denied. This is an issue anyone arguing for the independence of Greenland from the Kingdom of Denmark will have to be able to address.

A 2001 working group on security recommended conscription to be introduced in Greenland in order to recruit for the Danish armed forces as well as coast guard and emergency management in Greenland. 'If Greenland wants to move from a protectorate to home rule in true partnership with Denmark in security matters,' the working group concluded, 'the people of Greenland cannot avoid taking responsibility and make it contribution to the defence of the Realm by introducing conscription and make an effort within coast guard, patrolling the National park and civil emergency management.'⁵⁴ Conscription would be a method to ensure the recruitment of a sufficient number of people, and, perhaps more importantly, contribute to the training of a manpower pool to be mobilised in times of catastrophe or crisis, but it would solve the fundamental problem – whether or not Greenland would be able to muster sufficient forces on its own without crowding out other public and private jobs. Greenland is probably below what military historian John Keegan, following Harry Turney-High, termed the 'military horizon'.⁵⁵ With a population of 56.749 (2012) Greenland can hardly be expected to muster a military force able of conducting combined arms operations. If one compares with the European part of the Kingdom, then the 5.6 million people of Denmark upholds armed forces of 24,095

personnel, which is 0.43 percent of the population.⁵⁶ If Greenland was to employ 0.43 percent of its population in an independent defence force it would need to be able to recruit 244 persons. At present 295 people are employed in the police force (including civilians, local constables and reserves).⁵⁷ If one assumes that the police have not already drained the manpower pool for security professionals, then one has to consider whether 244 people would be sufficient to man current capabilities.

The Kingdom's armed forces deploy to Afghanistan, Mali and on other types of missions that a prospective Greenland Defence Force would not need to do. Yet, control of the territory, SAR and other coast guard duties can hardly be maintained by less effort than the current operations by the Danish armed forces. It is highly unlikely that a force of 244 people can, for example, provide 83 personnel for the command and control functions at Arctic Command in Nuuk and provide the 18 person crew for a number of KNUD RASMUSSEN Class Patrol ships on a continuous basis. The running costs of the Kingdom's defence capabilities in Greenland amounted to 550 million DKK in 2011 which translates to 4 % of Greenland's GDP in that year.⁵⁸ Today, the Naalakkersuisut spends 600 million on public order and security of a budget of 9.3 billion DKK.⁵⁹ Any military force is dependent on platforms, but the taxing Arctic environment make the proper equipment even more important and even more expensive in Greenland. Capabilities like patrol ships come with a considerable cost. An independent Greenland could probably not expect to inherit any Danish military capabilities since Greenland taxpayers have not financed these capabilities, procuring patrol ships, planes and helicopters would therefore add considerably to the defence bill. Furthermore, the Danish Defence Department expect to spend millions on new command and control assets in the Arctic, including drones, and is about to procure more patrol ships. These investments would need to be made by the Naalakkersuisut faced with the same need for more domain awareness and platforms to deploy in a huge territory. This would put further strain on the government budget.

The government of Iceland has considerable more resources, but, with a population of ca. 300,000, a manpower problem similar to the one facing Greenland. After independence from Denmark in 1944, Iceland circumvented that problem by opting for an emergency management and rescue organisation instead of armed forces. With an elaborate volunteer system Iceland is able to man search and rescue services and emergency management with the kind of light footprint Greenland would need.⁶⁰ Iceland was able to free ride on the former colonial power, since Danish ships patrolled the North Atlantic on their way to Greenland anyway and the United States created the Iceland Defence Force which, as a part of the US Atlantic Command,

was responsible for the defence of the island until 2006. Finally, NATO-membership provided Iceland with a stable and reliable geopolitical identity. When US-forces left after the Cold War NATO-membership proved all-important for Iceland's ability retain geopolitical stability without armed forces. Danish F-16s and planes from other NATO-member countries thus came to patrol Iceland's skies when the US Air Force had left. The end of the Cold War and climate change has meant that Iceland has defined itself as an Arctic coastal state looking north, rather than the frontier of the West looking south.⁶¹ From this perspective it seems reasonable to argue, as does the US Club of Rome, that 'as an independent country, it would be Greenland's interest to join NATO and the Arctic Council.'⁶² The US Club of Rome regards Greenland's eventual independence as an 'important step towards the American hemisphere.'⁶³ In this statement hemisphere is used in its geopolitical rather than its geographical sense and membership of the Arctic Council and NATO is seen as something which follows naturally from that. Greenlandic membership of the Arctic Council should be uncontroversial, whereas NATO membership would be highly controversial. Opposite the Icelandic example, Greenland's membership of NATO would not necessarily contribute to regional stability. The Danish government has rejected NATO involvement in the Arctic on the grounds that would send the wrong message to Moscow where Greenland's NATO-membership would surely be regarded as an escalation. For that reason the government in Nuuk might not get much support for membership from neither Copenhagen, Oslo nor Ottawa. Ottawa would also be opposed to the idea because Canada regards Arctic issues as a national issues rather than an issue that should be decided jointly by the NATO-partners, including the United States.⁶⁴

As in the 1950s, the United States would probably also regard NATO as a useful framework for a US presence in Greenland. Furthermore, with its territory bordering NATO powers and leaving a founding member of the Alliance, it would be very hard to argue that NATO's door was not open to Greenland. NATO's (Danish) Secretary General thus stated in 2013 that NATO remained open for new members but also warned that 'current NATO aspirants know that they must deliver'.⁶⁵ A European prospective member would be expected to reform their armed forces, contribute 2 % of its GDP to the defence budget, be well-functioning democracy and not bring unresolved security issues with it into the Alliance. Greenland will be able to deal with most of these issues and even present a budget of at least 4 % of GDP, if the Naalakkersuisut takes over Danish military commitments. This amount, however, reflects how huge a commitment setting up a defence force would be and would thus probably be an argument against rather than for membership. A further problem will be the relationship with

Russia and the concerns of a NATO presence in the Arctic from existing NATO members. The latter issue can be dealt with and it has been dealt with in previous NATO enlargements (especially if the territorial claims in the Arctic Sea are settled at this point).⁶⁶ The first issue is something Greenland can do little about. For Nuuk the most obvious solution would be to appeal to the United States for a security guarantee and a commitment to deploy naval and coast guard units to Greenland's waters. A responsibility which the President would have historical precedent and strategic reasons to accept – even if it might take some persuasion to make Congress pay the bill.

In sum, the 'New North' opens the territory by opening passages and establishing access to resources, these developments confirms established geopolitical notions about Greenland's position on the North American approaches. The United States has certain enduring security interests in the territory no matter who controls it. This interest in access and access denial has played out differently depending on military technology and the geopolitical challenges for which this technology was to be used, however. Where the United States could regard Greenland as Airstrip North in the early Cold War, the opening of the Arctic region and the aspirations of the people of Greenland have made engagement with the Greenland society a strategic necessity. When Greenland consider its options as a prospective independent state engaging with the United States on security issues in order to convince Washington that the Naalakkersuisut can secure the territory as well as the government in Copenhagen becomes a crucial issue. Geopolitics in the first, security focus meaning of the term thus offers little choice to the Greenlanders and demonstrates how few security and defence resources Greenland has. However, the second understanding of geopolitics offers a possibility for choice by expanding resources. This is the subject of the next section.

Mining for independence

Military technology created strategic globality for Greenland in the 20th century; in the beginning of the 21st century this globality is being supplemented by the two other elements Ulrich Beck associate with the globalisation process – that is global economic, political and social structures that transcends the state-structures of, in this case, the Danish Kingdom and the 'globalism' that follows when aspirations for the future is defined in terms of global connectivity and resources. The wish to include Arctic resources in the world economy or utilise them for national prosperity has been a defining feature of engagement in the Arctic, argues Justiina Dahl.⁶⁷ The Kingdom's Arctic strategy states:

Climate change and technological developments are also opening new possibilities for the Arctic ... Commercial opportunities in the Arctic are enormous, not least for the Greenland, Faroese and Danish industries, which to a great extent already possess the skills that will be far more in demand with the development of the Arctic region.⁶⁸

The geopolitics of Greenland's resources has been a defining feature of the Danish colonial engagement in the island and are pivotal to discussions of a post-colonial settlement. The colonial appropriation of Greenland was defined by the categorisation of its natural resources. In 1605 and 1606 King Christian IV sent the first expeditions to Greenland looking for silver. In 1805, the Royal Greenland and Faroe Trading Company sent Karl Ludwig Giesecke to Greenland and, unable to return to Europe because of the British naval blockade during the Napoleonic wars, Giesecke spent the next seven years doubling the number of registered minerals in Greenland and collecting a huge ethnographic collection.⁶⁹ The Danes made the list and it followed that the minerals on the list were Danish. Geology thus had a distinct political feature. This geopolitics was the politics of utilising Greenlandic resources for Danish economic development. Perhaps the most successful of these ventures was the mine in Ivittuut which produced cryolite, a substance used in aluminium production and thus an important asset for the Americans when they occupied Greenland during the Second World War. The mine ran for 130 years, closing in 1987, and the cryolite was processed in Copenhagen at a factory which, in true colonial form, was named Øresund after the waterway nearby rather than rather than Arsuk after the fjord where the mine was located. Neither the cryolite mine nor the Black Angle gold mine, which was the second largest mining operation, could match the funds invested in Greenland by the Danish government, however. During the 1970s and 1980s the revenues from the two mines were never more than 4 percent of net government spending on the island.⁷⁰

Copenhagen remained firmly in control of Greenland's natural resources until the 1990s when joint control between Nuuk and Copenhagen was established. In 2009, Nuuk took full control with natural resources right after home rule legislation had made it possible to do so. The Mineral Resources Act states in paragraph two that 'the Greenland Self-Government has the right of use of and the right to exploit mineral resources in the subsoil in Greenland.'⁷¹ Passing the act of 2009 was seen in Nuuk as an opportunity for Greenland to further investment in mining and oil exploration in Greenland's waters. The political context of this investment was that the dividends were to, first, balance the books of the Greenland government which at this

time were acutely aware that the public finances were not in a stable condition due to social commitments and pensions for which were not fundable by the present tax-base. 'The current increase in operating expenditure in the public sector is unsustainable,' the Naalakkersuisut concluded in a 2012 vision statement.⁷² Second, resource revenues were to fund the gradual transfer of the authority of other policy areas from Copenhagen to Nuuk leading to eventual independence. As the vision statement asserts, 'in the long term, the act on Greenland Government of Greenland is seen only as a step towards greater economic self-sustainability and political independence.'⁷³

The resource issue was thus a policy-area that defined the future of the union between Greenland and Denmark, but from Greenland's perspective it also defined the nature of Greenlandic society in post-independence. The resource issue thus became a bridge between past and future. In 2012 the Inatsisartut passed a large-scale works bill that allowed for the easing of certain rules on working conditions, pay etc. for the mining industry in order for mining companies to import workers for the establishment and operations of mines at a lower cost than dictated by existing Greenlandic tariffs. The bill generated much debate in Greenland and in Denmark because it introduced third parties in the Greenland-Denmark relationship. The bill was an invitation to mining companies to set up shop in Greenland. The bill mobilised opposition in Denmark as well as in Greenland. In Denmark the bill was seen as evidence that Greenland was set on the road to independence. In Greenland, its opponents saw it as proof that the new Greenland would be create on low wages which would put the profit in the hands of foreign workers for foreign companies rather than in the hands of the Inuit. In Greenland as well as in Denmark the bill thus produced a feeling of loss of control, and even if this loss of control had different sources and stemmed from different concerns, the effect was to cast resource development as a threat to the status quo. The 2013 election in Greenland was widely regarded as a reaction to this. Having defeated the sitting government, Ms Aleqa Hammond told the Guardian 'we are welcoming companies and countries that are interested in investing in Greenland. At the same time we have to be aware of the consequences as a people ... We are not giving up our values for investors' sake.'⁷⁴ The prospect of a New North upset existing social and political bargains in Greenland as well as in the relationship between Greenland and Denmark.

Since security issues remains within the purview of the government in Copenhagen the resource question soon acquired a security dimension. If the geopolitics of resources were about Greenlandic independence, then any issue, which might suggest that Greenland could not independently control its own resources, became contested. This manifested itself in three,

interrelated ways. First, following the large-scale works bill it was suggested that the introduction of a large foreign (e.g., Chinese) work force in a country of 56,000 people would in itself produce a threat to social stability. Second, the fact that foreign capital (e.g. Chinese) would be investing in Greenland's mines and offshore resources challenged Danish sovereignty and played into notions of a global competition for resources. Third, the prospect of mining uranium led the Danish government to play the security card arguing that the government in Nuuk could not approve the mining of uranium until the Danish government had ensured that the Kingdom would follow international treaties and have proper control of the uranium export. In both cases the two notions of geopolitics interacted.

The starting point for this discussion was the notion that Greenland's natural resources have an inherent political value. This was a well-established fact of Greenland-Denmark relations, but what was the political relation to other states or private actors? The US Geological Survey distinguishes between critical minerals and strategic minerals, where a mineral is critical if it is necessary for a vital sector of the economy to function, while a mineral is strategic if it is necessary for the functioning of the entire economy, especially in a time of war, and therefore the minerals needed to the production of military platforms are especially in focus.⁷⁵ The key is the notion of supply; and supply can be managed in different ways. A traditional geopolitical approach would identify the direct control of strategic resources as a pivotal element in security strategy. The management of supply thus becomes an issue of geopolitical importance in the first sense of the term, however, in the post-Cold War globalised world order supply is mostly managed by global markets which means that the second type of geopolitical concerns take over. In the current international system supply is managed by securing access to resources rather than guaranteeing territorial control of resources and production. This is also true of the production of military platforms. The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is an example of this. Lockheed Martin produces the F-35 and the plane consists of 40,000 individual parts produced in nine different countries – from Japan to Norway. Manufacturing the plane requires aluminium, titanium and certain composite materials in quantities that are expected to outstrip current supply. Therefore, Lockheed Martin has established a forecasting tool (termed Forecasted Raw Material) which is to advise partners as well as suppliers when certain minerals are needed and in what quantities.⁷⁶ In such a global defence market it makes little sense to focus on national stocks of raw materials and production facilities; instead one should focus on the flows of demand and supply and how to manage the risks inherent in these flows.⁷⁷ From the perspective of Western ministries of defence the global defence market is one way to bring

down procurement costs. The risk is that national ministries of defence lose control on supply. The question then becomes when the risk of such vulnerability becomes larger than the gain by having production and raw materials made elsewhere. The Chinese near-monopoly on Rare Earth Minerals generated a debate in the US on the dependency of Chinese raw materials for minerals crucial to the production of high-tech platforms and munitions.⁷⁸ In this case, the geopolitical interests of members of Congress who wanted to promote mining in their home states and the security, geopolitical concerns that China was using its monopoly to limit supply⁷⁹ worked together ensuring that in 2013 President Obama ordered the stockpiling of certain rare earths and the federal support for reopening mines that had been put out of business by Chinese competition.⁸⁰ The EU has raised similar concerns.⁸¹

Particular, the American debate on strategic raw materials demonstrates that Greenland's resources do not have an inherent strategic value. It is their role in the global market that is important. The Chinese might thus have an interest in the securing large, mineable rare earth deposits in order to maintain its market share, but the United States would have little reason to challenge this when the US interest is to get domestic production of rare earths minerals/elements going again. From the perspective of global capitalism, Chinese investments in Greenland's mines would be beneficial for the global economy, since Chinese investors thereby ploughed back their export profit in developing the global supply of resources. The fact that China made these investments in the Western world might even confirm the analysis that Chinese growth in many ways were given back to the West in terms of investment much the same way as petro-dollars from the Arab world had driven investment in Western means of production in previous decades. To the West, the crucial point was not whether the mine was owned by the Chinese, but whether the resources produced were part of the global international trading system.

United States and China approaches the region in similar ways focusing on access to resources and transit to markets. This means the two great powers are aligned in their interests to be a part of the New North, but it also creates a clear competition between them on who gets access to what. A spokesperson from the Chinese foreign ministry noted China's appreciation of 'the openness of the Danish central government and the Greenland government in cooperating with foreign enterprises', but also noted 'there are no Chinese workers entering Greenland.'⁸² However, this was not to say that there was no Chinese interest in the Arctic in general and Greenland in particular. Cang Chen notes how 'China's emerging Arctic Strategy is a component of its maritime strategy.'⁸³ China has thus shifted attention to Denmark, and Greenland, even if

that part of the world, in Chen's words, 'had seldom attracted any significant geopolitical attention from the East Asia power.'⁸⁴

The real security concern is therefore not on the geopolitical consequences of the ownership of resources, but about the profits for utilising these resources. If foreign powers earn the profit from Greenland's mine, the argument goes in Copenhagen that this would entrench Asia's perceived overtaking of the West. In Copenhagen, the government's platform states that the Denmark's status as one of the richest countries in the world was endangered by competition from new economies like Brazil, India and China.⁸⁵ In a time of economic crisis important segments of the Copenhagen discourse regard Greenland's natural resources as they always have: a way to spur economic growth in Denmark. The sense that an opportunity is being missed is a very important part of this argument. The fact that foreign investors might invest heavily in Greenland further underscored the notion of Denmark being left behind by events. If Greenland no longer depends on Denmark for investing in its future then the relationship between centre and periphery in the Kingdom was changing for good. Any actor investing huge sums in a small society would gain comparable influence and this geopolitical influence would compete with the Danish government's more formal and traditional influence in Greenland.

In Greenland the question is how this influence will play out. 'Climate change has set in motion a process of topographical reshaping in Greenland,' Mark Nuttall observes, 'which is coinciding with the emergence of a new Greenlandic nation that is redefining people's relationships to place, to the environment, to resources and to one another.'⁸⁶ Mining will attract several large investors who will rival the traditional industries like fisheries for political attention. An attention which one would assume would be very forthcoming since profits from mining was the basis for paying the government's bills and achieving the long-term goal of independence from Denmark. As Nuttall points out, this means that 'multinational companies and Greenland government bodies are involved in a codification of the environment and a quest to develop natural resources.'⁸⁷ The Naalakkersuisut best strategy for maintaining influence on its own affairs is to engage a plurality of mining companies and let them compete with one another. The government will have an inherent interest in a pro-business stand in order to realise its ambition in any case. This should keep the mining companies satisfied, and as long the government retains its freedom of action on other policy areas where the resource companies have a less direct interest, then it should be able to ensure that not all Greenlandic politics is geopolitics. Greenland further seeks to ensure this by emphasising cooperate social

responsibility and high environmental standards which serves define geopolitics narrowly in relation to other policy-areas.

In sum, the utilisation of Greenland's resources thus gives the government in Nuuk more freedom of action. Geopolitics makes it possible for Greenland to cash in on promises of future revenues. Even if the present economic situation for the government of Greenland actually look rather dire,⁸⁸ the prospect of future revenues and the interest in foreign governments and resource firms to court the government in Nuuk to get access to these resources give the Naalakkersuisut unprecedented clout in relation to the government in Copenhagen. The Naalakkersuisut has tried to capitalise on these geopolitical gains in terms of its international relations (that is the first notion of geopolitics) by adopting a higher international profile. This fundamentally challenged the stability of the home rule arrangement, as Nils Wang points out, because the home rule agreement was based on 'the premise that one can separate foreign and security policy from other policy areas, including the administration of natural resources.'⁸⁹ The Naalakkersuisut wanted to do the exact opposite. In the internal relations of the Kingdom it has proved easier to trade in geopolitical futures than actually operate on the international stage. Prime Minister Hammond thus insisted on a separate Greenlandic representation in the Arctic Council meeting in Sweden in 2013. The Swedish government denied this and Ms Hammond boycotted the meeting to the surprise of experienced diplomats in Copenhagen. This left Greenland unrepresented at the most important international forum on the Arctic and thus undermined the pretensions of autonomy from the Danish government that represented the Kingdom at the meeting. Danish officials were equally unimpressed by Nuuk's insistence on mining uranium without investigating the complicated legal instruments and supply-chain management employed by other uranium exporting countries.⁹⁰ On the other hand, officials in Nuuk were quite public in their disdain for Copenhagen's insistence on reviewing the matter. An anonymous official told the Danish newspaper *Berlingske* that from Nuuk's perspective there was no issue at all since 'Greenland has taken responsibility for natural resources, and the Mineral Resources Act did not distinguish between uranium and other mineral.'⁹¹ In Greenland's view uranium was just another mineral, whereas in Copenhagen one of the three parties in government had a record of opposition against nuclear power and the ministries appeared genuinely concerned with the administrative and legal task involved in managing the uranium. In spite of uranium's potential use in nuclear weapons, the real issue was not security, but the Naalakkersuisut's ability to manage the various issues, including security and public health,

involved in mining uranium. Mining uranium was a geopolitical issue in the second sense of the term masquerading as a geopolitical issue in the first sense of the term.

Conclusions

Geopolitics is often presented as a narrative of enduring characteristics offering, often quite literally, a map to follow. To a certain extent the case of Greenland demonstrates that such enduring interests do exist. The United States has a persistent interest in access and access denial to the North approaches. Yet, this interest manifests itself very differently depending on technological capabilities, climate, resources in the area and the engagement of other powers. Similarly, the economic potential in Greenland's minerals has been a consistent theme for hundreds of years. Yet, the mercantilist wish of the Danish kings to have their own deposits of silver and the Naalakkersuisut ambition of attracting foreign investors represent two very different economic and political approaches to using these resources. The case of Greenland thus demonstrates that geopolitics is malleable, but it also demonstrates that the geopolitics of international power politics and the geopolitics of the utilisation of local resources cannot be regarded in isolation from one another. This is especially so in a globalised world system where markets, technologies and interests play together. These constitute global flows which can be utilised by local actors in Nuuk and has to be managed and influenced in Beijing and Washington. The New North is as defined by the global context as it is by climate change. Greenland is thus regarding climate change as an opportunity to create wealth and thereby gain independence from Denmark. From this perspective the constitute metaphor of geopolitics may not be the map. Perhaps, one should rather regard geopolitics as a futures market. Futures are basically insurances against loss on a deal made in the present but with delivery in the future. In a futures market one sell or buy these insurances and investors make a profit by the margin between the value of the future and the value of the underlying commodity. The geopolitics of the New North is a future markets where the political game is being redefined by future possibilities. Greenland is trading geopolitical futures to attract foreign investment and gain greater autonomy in relation to Copenhagen. While the minerals and oil deposits are undoubtedly in the ground, the value of these assets remains a promissory note on a future that has yet to be realised. When the government in Copenhagen attempts to cash in on the futures arguing that the mining of uranium comes at another price (in terms of values, politics or red tape) a geopolitical game on what the future prospects of Greenland's minerals are being played. This game is the final act in a colonial power-play which is mirrored in games being played with

Washington, Beijing and other actors which want to invest in Greenland's future. This demonstrates that geopolitics is also malleable in the sense that actors can, to some extent at least, trade their options for one type of geopolitics with another. Where the first notion of geopolitics defines limits for political choice of Greenland's government and explains the 'legitimate' concerns of outside powers, the second notion of geopolitics is about how new resources create new opportunities for communities hitherto forced to live on a smaller resource base.

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