



Arctic identity interactions

Reconfiguring dependency in Greenland's
and Denmark's foreign policies

PhD Dissertation 2019

Marc Jacobsen



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN · DENMARK
PHD DISSERTATION 2019 · ISBN 978-87-7209-312-3

MARC JACOBSEN

Arctic identity interactions

Reconfiguring dependency in Greenland’s and Denmark’s foreign policies



Arctic identity interactions

Reconfiguring dependency in Greenland's and Denmark's
foreign policies

Main supervisor: Professor Ole Wæver, University of Copenhagen.

Co-supervisor: Associate Professor Ulrik Pram Gad, Aalborg University.

Date of submission: 15 September 2019

Date of public defence: 27 November 2019

Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen.

Centre for Advanced Security Theory (CAST).

Front page credit: illustration by Mads Pedersen, originally used in *Politiken* 9 September 2019.

Assessment committee:

Kristian Søby Kristensen (chair), Deputy head of centre, senior researcher,
Centre for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen.

Elana Wilson Rowe, Research professor, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

Iver B. Neumann, Director, Fridtjof Nansen Institute.

Doctor of Philosophy 2019 © Marc Jacobsen

ISBN 978-87-7209-312-3 (Printed book)

ISBN 978-87-7209-321-5 (E-book)

Printed by SL grafik, Frederiksberg, Denmark (slgrafik.dk)

Arctic identity interactions

Reconfiguring dependency in Greenland's and Denmark's foreign policies

Marc Jacobsen

PhD Dissertation

Department of Political Science

University of Copenhagen

September 2019

Contents

PART 1: Dissertation framework

Preface	7
Acknowledgements	10
List of figures and photos	12
Overview of articles and status of publication	13
I. Introduction	15
Research design	18
II. IR goes North: identifying literary lacunae and contributions to state-of-the-art	25
Institutionalized circumpolar cooperation and the formation of Arctic IR	26
Conflicting national interests? Arctic IR debate and mainstream's neglect of Greenland	28
Identity, region-building and security as discourse	30
Summing up literary lacunae and contributions	35
III. Theoretical positioning: foreign policy identity as discourse and praxis	39
Poststructuralism's sense of discourses	39
Self, other and foreign policy	41
Security as speech acts and identity protection	44
Sovereignty games: tools for parsing identity interactions	45
Summing up theoretical positioning	47
IV. Assembling an archive: methods and methodological considerations	50
Texts and speeches as empirical foundation	50
Snowballing interviews and the importance of gatekeepers	52
Journalism: an unexpected but necessary key to parts of the archive	55
Ethnographic observations	58
Blind spots	63
Summing up methods and methodological considerations	67
V. Findings and contributions	69
Summary of articles' cohesion and contributions	70
Conclusion	76
Bibliography	80
Summaries	94
Summary	94
Resumé (Danish summary)	95
Eqikkaaneq (Greenlandic summary)	96
ᑭᐱᑲᐸᓂᑦ ᑕᐅᓄᓂᑦ ᑖᓄᓂᑦ ᑕᐅᓄᓂᑦ (Inuktitut summary)	98

PART 2: Dissertation articles

1. Desecuritization as Displacement of Controversy: geopolitics, law and sovereign rights in the Arctic.
2. Setting the scene in Nuuk: introducing the cast of characters in Greenlandic foreign policy narratives.
3. Digging Sustainability: scaling and sectoring of sovereignty in Greenland and Nunavut mining discourses.
4. Greenland's Arctic Advantage: articulations, acts and appearances of sovereignty games.
5. Denmark's Arctic foreign policy identity: from discursive enveloping to articulated acknowledgement of Danish dependency on Greenland.

Appendix I: printed journalistic articles in Danish and Greenlandic

1. Good bye USA, hyvää päivää Finland: Formandsskabet for Arktisk Råd skifter hænder i Fairbanks, *Sermitsiaq*, 2017 (19):28-29.
2. Tre stemmer, én delegation: Rigsfællesskabets taletid i Arktisk Råd deles mellem Danmark, Grønland og Færøerne, *Sermitsiaq*, 2017 (20):28-29.
3. Tætte naboer, lang flyrejse, *Sermitsiaq*, 2017 (46):18-19.
4. Iqaluits borgmester: Nunavut kan lære meget af Grønland, *Sermitsiaq*, 2017 (47):30-31.
5. Til tops i Nunavut: ny regeringsleder tager magten på inuit manér, *Sermitsiaq*, 2017 (48):36-37.
6. Ilulissat Erklæringen 10 år: Et fredeligt Arktis, *Sermitsiaq*, 2018 (21):22-23.
7. Grønland er stærkt repræsenteret ved Arctic Circle. *Sermitsiaq*. 2018 (42): 30-31.
8. Den internationale Arktis-forskning skal bidrage mere til lokalsamfundene. *Sermitsiaq*, 2018 (43): 32-33.
9. Grønlands repræsentation i Island giver nye internationale muligheder. *Sermitsiaq*. 2018, (44): 32-33.

Appendix II: online journalistic articles in English

1. Nunavut's new Premier is Inuk with capital I, *High North News*, 20 November 2017.

2. Forward! Greenland's new government in place, *High North News*, 18 May 2018.
3. Ilulissat Declaration's 10-year anniversary, *High North News*, 23 May 2018.
4. Denmark's Minister of Foreign Affairs: The Ilulissat Declaration Exemplifies Constructive Arctic Dialogue, *High North News*, 23 May 2018.
5. Ilulissat: Peace, Scientific Cooperation and Hans Island, *High North News*, 24 May 2018.
6. Faroese Foreign Minister: We definitely benefit from the Arctic attention, *High North News*, 24 May 2018.
7. Greenland's Foreign Minister: Arctic attention means a lot, *High North News*, 25 May 2018.
8. The Curious Case of Greenland's Research Hub, *High North News*, 25 May 2018.

Preface

The Arctic as a region has been spoken, written and imagined into existence by academics, politicians, journalists, Indigenous organizations, NGO's and military strategists during the past 30-40 years (Keskitalo 2004, 2007; Steinberg et al. 2015). In Denmark, circumpolar politics is still a fairly new discovery, both in the wider public and within more elitist spheres. While this recent change has been essential for determining that the present dissertation is first and foremost about Greenland's and Denmark's foreign policy identities in relation to the Arctic, the motivation, however, is rooted further back in a few memorable events which have guided my curiosity towards the very North and most intensively formed my research interests throughout the past seven years. Here I will take the opportunity to present a few of those main events.

During my first week as a university student, a submarine planted a Russian titanium flag on the geographic North Pole, 4,300 meters below sea level. In times when the so-called Global War on Terror, the rise of China and the long-standing Israel-Palestine conflict occupied most of the international news landscape, this symbolic act represented something refreshingly new, sowing a seed for future investigation. Meanwhile, the Arctic slowly emerged as a new region of interest to both Danish foreign policy professionals and the man in the street, encouraged by two central publications targeted at each audience; an official Arctic strategy was published following Denmark's Arctic Council chairmanship in 2009-2011, and shortly after the book *When the ice disappears: Denmark as a great power in the Arctic, Greenland's riches and the quest for the North Pole* (Breum 2011) hit the booksellers' bestseller list. As a master's student in London searching for a topic for my MA thesis in International Relations, these two publications presented welcoming materializations of the, until then, rather sporadic remarks regarding the Arctic in a Danish context. With the Russian flag-planting still clear in mind, the topic of my MA thesis became the development of the regional security discourse as seen through the concepts of securitization and sectors as coined by the Copenhagen School.

In May 2013, during the final stages of writing my MA thesis, I became more aware of the Government of Greenland's international aspirations, and of the postcolonial relationship that preconditions Denmark's role in the Arctic. The defining event was when Greenland's then newly elected Premier, Aleqa Hammond, boycotted the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Kiruna, Sweden, in discontent with Greenland's subordinated role. Her decision was widely criticized, but it

successfully positioned Greenland as a more autonomous international actor and drew attention to the unequal postcolonial relationship with Denmark. The same meeting was also a proof of the increased internationalization of the region as China, Italy, India, Japan, South Korea and Singapore were all approved as observers to the Arctic Council, while the EU's application was rejected due to its ban on seal product import. Hence, the event both demonstrated a more detailed deepening into the vertical relations within the Arctic states, and a widening beyond the region where non-Arctic states accelerated their attempts to seek influence. Following this event, my primary research interest became Greenland's foreign policy, and in the pursue of becoming a PhD student, I wrote another¹ master's thesis about how alleged threats to Greenland's societal security had been used to enhance Greenland's foreign policy autonomy.

In May 2016, three months into my PhD studies, a Danish foreign and security policy review recommended that Denmark "shall take advantage of the position as an Arctic great power to influence the development in the Arctic to the benefit of the Kingdom, the region and the Greenlandic and Faroese peoples" (Taksøe-Jensen 2016:ix). Unlike Canada, Norway, Iceland and Russia, the Arctic is not part of the prevailing tale about Danish national identity, and nor is 'great power' a commonly used adjective when describing Denmark's place in world politics. Reactions were therefore mixed and since the review had been requested by the then Danish government, it was widely received as a piece of special pleading. Whether the review had a decisive effect on policy or not is a reasonable question, but notwithstanding it did succeed at drawing attention towards the new opportunities in the Arctic in the aim to gain public acceptance of the new northbound initiatives financed by taxpayers' money. As such, the number of employees working with Arctic affairs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was subsequently doubled in times when the ministry was compelled to lower its total number of employees. Moreover, the Arctic Command received an additional 120 million DKK, and 3 million DKK were allocated to an Arctic research hub in Nuuk, while Denmark began to host and actively participate in agenda-setting Arctic events. All of which the review had listed as concrete recommendations for how to enhance Denmark's Arctic presence. At the same time, the Arctic also became yet a more common point of reference in the Danish foreign policy discourse.

¹ In Denmark, it is required to have a two-year master to become a PhD student in the 5+3 program. As my British master was only one year - and since I then already had finished 1½ years of my master in Political Communication & Management – I wrote this second thesis.

Following the launch of the review, the main person in charge, ambassador Peter Taksøe-Jensen, stated in an interview that “[t]he biggest threat to our interests in the Arctic is not the Russians, but the prospect of a weakened cohesion within the Danish Realm” (Breum 2016). In that respect, the review itself did not contribute to stronger a cohesion as Greenland’s then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vittus Qujaukitsoq, strongly criticized it for not taking Greenlandic interests into consideration, while it further fuelled a debate over whether the Government of Greenland should write its own Arctic strategy. This exchange of views convinced me to delve deeper into the nooks and corners of the Danish-Greenlandic foreign policy identities in relation to the Arctic, as the contours of how the international attention affects their postcolonial relationship seemed to appear. Motivated by this development in the spring of 2016, I decided to write this dissertation about how foreign policy representatives use the global Arctic attention to position Greenland and Denmark internationally.

Acknowledgements

Whereas writing a PhD dissertation is indeed solitary, the product is as much the outcome of a social process of intelligent engagements and invaluable distractions. First of all, I owe two special thanks to my supervisors, Ole Wæver and Ulrik Pram Gad, for their excellent guidance, which has always been perfectly balanced between critical, kind and clever. As the reader will undoubtedly notice, Ole and Ulrik are my two major academic sources of inspiration and if it was not for them, this dissertation would look a whole lot different, if at all present. I have been incredibly privileged to have them as my supervisors. Thanks!

Throughout the years, many outstanding scholars have provided advices on how to navigate in academia and constructively commented on early stages of my work. Anders Wivel and Jeppe Strandsbjerg generously read and commented on a draft of almost the entire dissertation, hence helping me towards converting the framework into a more coherent whole. Jeppe deserves an extra word of gratitude for his support and always candid opinions which were decisive for my transition from student to a budding scholar. My research has benefitted greatly from seminars and discussions at University of Copenhagen's Centre for Advanced Security Theory (CAST), the Arctic Politics Research Seminars and the seminars with the PhD group where an infinite list of people have engaged with the early stages of what is now my dissertation. Among these people, I particularly would like to thank: Rebecca Adler-Nissen, Dean Cooper-Cunningham, Jakob Dreyer, Anine Hagemann, Minda Holm, Hans Mouritzen, Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, Christian Rostbøll, Øyvind Svendsen and Kristian Søby Kristensen, while I am also thankful to Lene Hansen and Peter Dahler-Larsen for their thorough engagements with a draft of the methods chapter.

I am indebted to several other research environments outside the city walls of Copenhagen, especially University of British Columbia's political science department where I spent one semester with Michael Byers as my provisional supervisor. Michael's generosity as a host in Vancouver and in his home on Salt Spring Island made me feel welcome from the first day, while his wit and countless contacts were decisive for my field trip to Nunavut. My research stay would neither have been so amusing without the good company of Mark Stoller and Andreas Østhagen who are always up for detailed discussions about Arctic politics and impressively determined on introducing me to Vancouver's innumerable local breweries. My friends and colleagues from *The Arctic Institute* deserve special thanks for constituting the most inspiring community of young Arctic scholars across

the Atlantic. I am particularly grateful to the members of the leadership group who continue to broaden my Arctic horizon: Malte Humpert, Andreas Raspotnik, Kathrin Stephen, Andreas Østhagen and Victoria Hermann - the latter with whom I had the privilege and pleasure to co-edit a special issue about securitizations in the Arctic (Jacobsen and Herrmann 2017).

Throughout the past three years, I have been fortunate to take part in courses, conferences and field trips in Europe, North America and the Arctic. This would not have been possible without a generous grant from the Velux Foundation, while interviewees and key contacts in Greenland, Nunavut, Canada and Denmark offered more substance and support than I could ever have wished for. Among these, I especially would like to thank Mira Kleist and Letia Obed who provided outstanding assistance and wise recommendations, pivotal for my extensive stays in Greenland and Nunavut. Back in Denmark - but still mentally in the Arctic - I am grateful to Martin Breum for having me as a research assistant on, first, the book *Balladen om Grønland* (English: *The Greenland Dilemma*) and, later, on a geopolitics course on Svalbard for two groups of Danish journalists. Both very educational and sometimes even entertaining. I would also like to thank Rebekka Knudsen and Minik Rosing for a great time working for *Greenland Perspective* and for co-editing a special issue celebrating the 10-year anniversary of Greenland's Self-Government (Jacobsen, Knudsen and Rosing 2019). Minik's mix of humour, hard work, and wide intellectual horizon will always stand as an ideal for me.

More than they are themselves aware of, my friends and family in Copenhagen constitute my solid base, essential for doing both the most basic and advanced things in life. A big thank you to my best friends, Rasmus and Michael, for helping me with notes and proof reading, and for keeping me relatively sane through frequent chats, weekly swims, and our common passion for football. I also want to thank my siblings, their spouses and wonderful children for both showing interest in my work and unwinding my mind when often needed. My granddad, who recently passed away, will always be in my heart and mind, reminding me to forever look for adventures. I warmly thank my dad, mom and Mogens for their encouragements to follow my own interests and for their untiring support allowing me to keep on exploring. Last and most importantly; the most invaluable distractions, reminding me of life's true priorities. Louise and Barbara; this one is dedicated to you.

Marc Jacobsen, Copenhagen, 15 September 2019

List of figures and photos

Figure 1	page 20
-----------------	---------

Caption: *Illustration of how the dissertation articles relate to the present framework.*

Figure 2	page 23
-----------------	---------

Caption: *Research design.*

Figure 3	page 32
-----------------	---------

Caption: *Map of the most prevalent natural science-based definitions of the Arctic region.*

Figure 4	page 66
-----------------	---------

Caption: *Overview of interviews and where they are used.*

Photo 1	page 54
----------------	---------

Caption: *Vivian Motzfeldt and Anders Samuelsen co-hosted the Ilulissat Declaration's 10-year anniversary in May 2018.*

Photo 2	page 56
----------------	---------

Caption: *Then U.S. Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson (right) was chair of the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska, May 2017.*

Photo 3	page 56
----------------	---------

Caption: *The respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs of (clockwise) Norway, Russia, Finland and Denmark during the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska, May 2017.*

Photo 4	page 62
----------------	---------

Caption: *Paul Quassa after he won the seat as Premier of Nunavut during the Nunavut Leadership Forum in November 2017.*