

Diplomatic Extremes and Constitutionalism: The Case of the United States, Greenland, and Denmark

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Abstract

Extremes are occurring with increasing frequency, with potential implications for constitutionalism. This article advances a theoretical framework for analyzing the nature and constitutional effects of a particular form of extremity—what we term a *diplomatic extreme*. The framework integrates classical constitutional and legal analysis with the Copenhagen School’s theory of securitization and emotional appeal.¹ Drawing on international relations scholarship on Greenlandic sovereignty games,² the article examines whether and how diplomatic extremes can extend the political sovereignty of non-sovereign countries. Specifically, it investigates if the American president’s assertions that America should ‘take over’ Greenland were securitized—strategically framed by Greenlandic governmental actors to enlarge Greenland’s foreign affairs competences. The analysis finds that this was not the case.

Keywords: Greenland, Arctics, security, the Danish Realm, competences, foreign affairs, sovereignty, post-colonialism, securitization, emotional responses, diplomatic extreme.

1 Introduction

From December 2024 to January 2025, the president of the United States made a series of unexpected statements concerning Greenland. On December 22, 2024, the president declared that “the United States feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity.”³ On January 6, 2025, he wrote on Truth Social that “Greenland is an incredible place, and the people will benefit tremendously if, and when, it becomes part of our Nation.”⁴ The following day—after his son landed in Greenland without an official invitation—the president added: “They, and the Free World, need safety, security, strength, and PEACE! This is a deal that must happen.”⁵

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1. Marc Jacobsen, Ole Wæver, and Gad Ulrik Pram, “Introduction: Analyzing the Greenlandic Security Configuration,” in *Greenland in Arctic Security: (De)Securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitics Freeze*, ed. Marc Jacobsen, Ole Wæver, and Gad Ulrik Pram (University of Michigan Press, 2024).

2. Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Ulrik Pram Gad, “Introduction: Postimperial Sovereignty Games in the Nordic Region,” *Conflict and Cooperation* 49, no. 1 (2014): 3–32; Ulrik Pram Gad, “Greenland Projecting Sovereignty: Denmark Protecting Sovereignty Away,” in *European Integration and Postcolonial Sovereignty Games: The EU Overseas Countries and Territories*, ed. Rebecca Adler-Nissen and Ulrik Pram Gad (Routledge, 2012); and Marc Jacobsen, “Arktis: Grønlands Strategiske Arena for Større Udenrigspolitisk Suverænitet,” *Politica* 51, no. 4 (2019): 485–506.

3. Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), “I am pleased to announce Ken Howery as my choice for United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark,” *Truth Social*, December 22, 2024, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/113698764270730405>.

4. Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), “I am hearing that the people of Greenland are ‘MAGA.’” *Truth Social*, January 6, 2025, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/113783930691285775>.

5. Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), “Don Jr. and my Reps landing in Greenland.” *Truth Social*, January 7, 2025, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/113787590758180339>.

In an era defined by the heightened presence and influence of extremes, scholars of constitutional and political science must craft common conceptual frameworks and a common vocabulary that illuminate the consequences of the experienced extremes for constitutionalism and international norms. In this article, we sketch out a two-level framework to study this and develop the legal concept of a ‘diplomatic extreme,’ which will assist scholars and practitioners alike to unfold the character and consequences of diplomatic threats in the area of digital diplomacy 2.0.

To illustrate the practical application of the theoretical framework and concept, we analyze the legal character of the American president’s claims that are cited above. Also, to measure their possible effect on legal and constitutional norms, we study how these claims were characterized and politically used by the Greenlandic and Danish governments, as well as how citizens responded to these characterizations emotionally.

Greenland is a non-sovereign country and part of the Danish Realm—a semi-federation composed of Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands.⁶ As demonstrated by political science scholarship, non-sovereign countries are active political actors that seek to enhance their practical, symbolic, and formal capabilities.⁷ As we demonstrate below, competences in foreign relations, security, and defense (here collectively referred to as *foreign relations*) formally lie with the Danish government. However, since the conduct of foreign policy constitutes a core attribute of sovereign statehood, assuming a foreign policy role has long been central to Greenland’s practical and symbolic pursuit of sovereignty.⁸

Our approach to the study of how extremes may influence constitutionalism is inspired by the so-called Copenhagen School’s securitization theory. The Copenhagen School refers to a group of international relations scholars who have developed a sophisticated theoretical framework for the analysis of whether and how actors discursively construct threats for political means. Accordingly, this line of work has shown that government actors may construct other actors, situations, or abstract phenomena as *threats*, and that successful constructions of such threats—so-called *successful securitizations* of such actors, situations, or phenomena—can legitimize the use of political measures that would otherwise be regarded as impermissible, or *extraordinary means*. Given Greenland’s longstanding history of expanding its practical, political autonomy from Denmark—particularly within the symbolically significant domain of foreign affairs—it is conceivable that Greenlandic governmental actors might have sought to *securitize* the American president’s claims about Greenland to expand Greenlandic competences in this area. Moreover, if the president’s claims take on the character of a diplomatic *extreme*—a term, which we develop and explain below, such discursive securitizations might be more readily achievable.

To explore this possible scenario (or hypothesis) and illustrate the practical use of our conceptualization of diplomatic extremes and their potential consequences for constitutionalism, our cross-disciplinary article holds three interrelated analyses, each of which explores one of the three research questions:

1. What are the Danish and Greenlandic formal competences within foreign affairs as established by the Danish Constitution and the Self-Government Act, and how have political practices in this domain evolved?
2. Can the American president’s claims from December 2024-January 2025 be characterized as a *diplomatic extreme* from a legal and constitutional perspective, and were they successfully securitized politically during the period?
3. Did Greenlandic governmental actors seek to expand Greenland’s relative competences in foreign policy in the aftermath of these events?

6. J.C.S. Justinussen, “Rigsfællesskabet i et Føderalt Perspektiv,” *Politica* 51, no. 4 (2019).

7. Rebecca Adler-Nissen, *Diplomacy as Impression Management: Strategic Face-Work and Post-Colonial Embarrassment*, Centre for International Peace and Security Studies Working Paper No. 38 (McGill University, 2012).

8. Adler-Nissen and Gad, “Introduction”; Gad, “Greenland Projecting Sovereignty”; and Jacobsen, “Arktis.”

The article advances a two-level analytical framework that enables, first, the identification of an event's character as a diplomatic extreme and, second, the assessment of the extent to which such an event is successfully constructed as a threat (i.e. securitized). In developing this framework, we distinguish between the legal essence of a phenomenon and its constructed meaning, emphasizing that the latter is crucial for understanding all institutional implications of extremes. With this two-level framework, we introduce political science securitization theory to constitutional scholarship. By the same token, we add legal and constitutional analyses to the much-applied political science theory of securitization. In turn, an independent theoretical contribution is the introduction of the concept of a 'diplomatic extreme' as a new legal phenomenon. A diplomatic extreme refers to one or more diplomatic events that may pose a threat to constitutionalism and international law because they do not accept formal rules or international agreements. Furthermore, as we describe below, a second characteristic of this term is that it applies the digital diplomatic tools that are available in the area of digital diplomacy 2.0.

Though a diplomatic extreme may in itself pose a threat to constitutionalism and international rules, scholars of constitutionalism should be particularly aware of how such extremes are securitized by leading political actors. Accordingly, successful securitizations of diplomatic extremes may politically seek to legitimize the disruption of constitutional arrangements or international legal norms in ways that are more subtle than the diplomatic extreme that gave rise to these in the first place.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. The first part outlines our theoretical foundations in political science and elaborates on the analytical framework and our theoretical expectations. We then present the research design and methods, followed by the three empirical analyses. The subsequent discussion interprets the findings—particularly why, contrary to our expectations, Greenlandic government leaders did not seek to expand Greenland's competences in foreign relations. We then assess the explanatory capacity of our theoretical framework before concluding with reflections on the implications of our findings for constitutionalism under conditions of extremity.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

1.1.1 A Post-Colonial Game of Sovereignty

In alignment with the perspective set forth by theories of post-colonial games, political science studies of Greenland and Denmark often approach this relationship as one that is constantly negotiated—bent, stretched, and twisted—through symbolic gestures, acts, and claims that are carried out in continuous sovereignty games.⁹ Accordingly, numerous political science studies have shown how Greenlandic actors have gradually increased their influence in the areas of foreign affairs while staying within the overall framework of the Danish constitution.¹⁰ In the study below, we adopt a similar theoretical perspective. Consequently, we assume that Greenlandic government actors will strive to increase Greenlandic sovereignty, particularly within areas of foreign affairs, which is a particular important symbolic step towards increased sovereignty.

1.1.2 Institutions, Securitizations, and Change

Overall, we set out from the assumption that formal and informal institutions are solid. Yet if an extreme is successfully constructed as a threat, such an extreme may provide political legitimacy

9. Adler-Nissen and Gad, "Introduction."

10. Sara Olsvig, "Greenland's Ambiguous Action Space: Testing Internal and External Limitations between the US and Danish Arctic Interests," *The Polar Journal* 12, no. 2 (2022): 215–239; Sara Olsvig, "Odd Couples' Win-Sets: Maintaining U.S. Basing Rights Through New Two-Level Game Negotiations With Greenland," *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies* 7, no. 1 (2024): 93–110; Jacobsen, "Arktis"; and Ulrik Pram Gad, Ole Wæver, and Marc Jacobsen, "Conclusion: Learning from Greenland in Arctic Security," in *Greenland in Arctic Security: (De)Securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitics Freeze*, ed. Marc Jacobsen, Ole Wæver, and Gad Ulrik Pram (University of Michigan Press, 2024).

for actors who wish to carry out institutional changes, especially in institutions where the room for maneuver¹¹ is somewhat diffusely defined. We move to this now.

The Copenhagen School's securitization theory (ST) provides analytical tools for examining how social dynamics and key actors' constructions shape ideas of threats to security, thereby legitimizing the use of extraordinary means politically.¹² Here, we find inspiration in the theory's combination of an objective and a more constructivist approach to assessing how the concept of threats may open up a political room for changes in institutional relations and procedure.

According to ST, rather than investigating if an actor (e.g., a state) or phenomenon (e.g., pollution) poses merely an 'objective' threat to another actor, ST focuses on the processes of securitization through which a key actor successfully frames someone or something as a threat. This political science theory states that a 'securitization' happens when "a securitizing actor with a significant ethos declares a valued referent object to be existentially threatened, and a relevant audience accepts the possible use of extraordinary [political] means [to address that threat]."¹³ Often, 'the valued referent object which is existentially threatened' is the collective identity, a 'we' that is deemed threatened by an external 'them' or 'that.' In this case, a way to study if securitization of a 'someone' or 'something' is possibly taking place is to analyze how this someone or something is being constructed on a scale made up by Chantal Mouffe that assesses how difference is managed in a democracy, between agonism (tolerated difference) and antagonism (threatening difference).¹⁴

When 'something' or 'someone' is successfully securitized, this provides political legitimacy for the use of extraordinary means—i.e., means that would otherwise not be tolerated.¹⁵ In its most solid form, such extraordinary means could be the use of military violence or of emergency orders that set aside constitutional procedures or directly ascribe institutional change. Yet, in less solid forms, it could also figure in a more diffuse form—e.g. as a grey zone interpretation of a constitutional or legislative provision or the appearance of a new practice or convention. In the analyses below, we focus on this type of institutional change.

For successful securitization to take place, the relevant audience must accept the securitization as well as the suggested use of extraordinary means. The question of what exactly constitutes audience acceptance of securitizations has given rise to many discussions.¹⁶ Here, we focus on that which Thierry Balzacq et al. term "the moral audience," i.e., the people who support or protest the securitization morally, which is different from formal decision makers, who provide or deny a mandate for the proposed actions of possible extraordinary means ("the formal audience").¹⁷ In addition, and in accordance with recent recognitions that citizens' emotions are of importance to successful securitization,¹⁸ we look to the emotional responses of Greenlandic and Danish citizens to their government's possible securitization narratives.

1.1.3 Securitization in the Area of Digital Diplomacy 2.0

Below, our study focuses on diplomatic claims in the social media communication of key government actors, which is often termed 'Digital Diplomacy 2.0' or 'Twiplomay.' During the past decade, the scene of diplomacy has changed as states "now use platforms like Twitter not only to report official

11. Here, we define room of maneuver as the freedom to carry out political action without being restricted by other actors, institutions or general circumstances.

12. Marc Jacobsen and Signe Lyngholm Lindbjerg, "Denmark's Security Perspectives on USA, China, and Russia," in *Greenland in Arctic Security: (De)securitization Dynamics under Climatic Thaw and Geopolitical Freeze*, ed. Marc Jacobsen, Ole Wæver, and Gad Ulrik Pram (University of Michigan Press, 2024).

13. *Ibid.*, 10.

14. *Ibid.*, 198–199; and Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics. Thinking the World Politically* (Vereso, 2013).

15. Jacobsen, Wæver, and Pram, "Introduction," 24.

16. Thierry Balzacq, Sarah Léonard, and Jan Ruzicka, "'Securitization' Revisited: Theory and Cases," *International Relations* 30, no. 4 (2016): 494–531.

17. *Ibid.*; and Azade S. Eryiğit, Sinem Akgül-Açıkmeşe, and H. Emrah Karaoğuz, "Securitization and Digital Diplomacy: Zelensky's 'Security-Tweet' during the Russia-Ukraine War," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 4 (2025): 5–7.

18. Eric Van Rythoven, "Learning to Feel, Learning to Fear? Emotions, Imaginaries, and Limits in the Politics of Securitization," *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 5 (2015): 458–475.

activity but to shape public narratives, build legitimacy, and engage in real-time diplomacy with both foreign and domestic audiences.”¹⁹ Besides effectuating direct and simultaneous communication between government actors in one country and the news media, citizens, and colleagues at home and in other countries,²⁰ this new type of diplomacy has blurred the online and offline acts of diplomacy.²¹

The opportunity for real-time direct engagement with other countries’ citizens lays the foundation for what we term “extreme diplomacy.” Extreme diplomacy is diplomacy that is enacted by use of social media and violate formal institutions. Hence, besides being directed towards government actors and towards citizens alike, for claims to qualify as an act of extreme diplomacy, the content of the diplomatic claims made must be extreme in the form that they are violating international laws or constitutionalism. Often, practical aspects of these are similar to what is known as “diplomatic crises” in everyday language, yet the two characters of the diplomatic events, we are discussing here make these extremes. Also, due to their often-aggressive nature, they should be relatively easy for government actors to securitize.

1.2 Design and Methods

Our study applies several types of analyses: traditional constitutional and legal analyses, content analyses of social media posts, as well as use of secondary sources with polls of citizen’s emotions. This section describes our design and the method used in the three types of analyses.

The legal analysis illustrates first the content of the diplomacy carried out by the American president, and secondly the constitutional juridical relation between Denmark and Greenland as evident in the foreign policy of these countries and Greenland’s road towards possible independence from Denmark.

Like the study of Adaze Eryigit et al.,²² we study possible securitizations in digital diplomacy as these are carried out by key government actors. Our social media content analysis focuses on the period from December 22, 2024, when the American president re-stated the idea that the United States should acquire Greenland (he had done so in 2019 as well), to June 7, 2025, when the French president visited Greenland and the attention on the Greenlandic-American-Danish relationship fell considerably in Danish and Greenlandic media. In addition, we add another month to make sure that all relevant posts are included in our material, so the full study period runs from December 22, 2024 to July 7, 2025. A research assistant selected all relevant posts on the Facebook, Instagram, and X profiles of the Danish and Greenlandic prime ministers, the ministers of foreign affairs, and any official social media accounts of these offices during the period.²³ Here, ‘relevant’ was defined as mentioning or referring to the American president’s claims or relevant events that were carried out during the period. To gain information on the timing and content of key events, which were of importance to our interpretation of the relevant posts, we also included posts made by key American actors and institutions on X and Truth Social.²⁴ In total, our study includes 167 non-unique posts.

19. Eryigit, Akgül-Açıkmeşe, and Karaoğuz, “Securitization and Digital Diplomacy.”

20. Faith Değirmenci and Elifnur TerziOğlu, “A Digital Diplomacy Irony: Donald Trump,” *OPUS Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi* 19, no. 47 (2022): 490–505; Eytan Gilboa, “Digital Diplomacy,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*, ed. Costas Constantinou, Pauline Kerr, and Paul Sharp (Sage Publications, 2016); and Britney Harris, “Diplomacy 2.0: The Future of Social Media in Nation Branding,” *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy* 4, no. 1 (2013).

21. Kristin Anabel Eggeling and Rebecca Adler-Nissen, “The Synthetic Situation in Diplomacy: Scopic Media and the Digital Mediation of Estrangement,” *Global Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (2021).

22. Eryigit, Akgül-Açıkmeşe, and Karaoğuz, “Securitization and Digital Diplomacy.”

23. We study the posts made by the Danish and Greenlandic prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs, as well as posts of the official profiles of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Danish Prime Minister’s Department, the Greenlandic Government, and the Greenlandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Due to the Greenlandic election for the Inatsisartut, the Greenlandic Parliament, on March 11, 2024, there are two Greenlandic prime ministers during the period that we study. The Greenlandic minister of foreign affairs remains the same throughout the period.

24. We analyze posts made by the American president, the secretary of state, the White House, the vice president, the secretary of defense, and one of the president’s sons Donald Trump Jr.

The social media posts are analyzed from two perspectives. Initially, we study the messages with a look at claims of securitization made by Greenlandic and Danish government actors on social media in Danish, English, and Greenlandic. Here, we are interested in narratives on threats and in who these narratives set forth as the object of threat. Hereafter, we study the same data with a focus on direct or indirect claims of political competence of Greenland in foreign affairs. It is important to stress that with this material, we are studying the discourse set out by government actors only. Accordingly, possible competing discourses are not captured by our research design.

Third, our design involves a study of relevant polls that have been carried out by others, since these may inform us on the moral audience's response to the narratives put forth by Greenlandic and Danish government leaders. In particular, we are concerned with establishing the Danish and Greenlandic peoples' emotions during the periods that are of relevance to the securitizations made. Yet, it is important to point out that since our data for measuring the response of the moral audience is only secondary, we are not able to say something about the emotional responses to the exact claims of the government actors, i.e., to state a precise relation of any form. Nevertheless, we believe that the secondary data captures the overall emotional response towards these rather well, since Greenlandic and Danish government leaders' narratives on the American president's claims and actions gained much publicity in the media during the periods in question here.

2 Danish and Greenlandic Competences in Foreign Affairs

In this section, we analyze the formal competences of Denmark and Greenland within foreign affairs. Hereafter, we assess how political practices in this area have evolved.

2.1 The Legal Determinants

The Self-Government Act lists policy areas which can be taken over by Greenland at points in time set by the Greenlandic Self-Government authorities such as the law of property and obligations (list 1 in the Act), while others can only be taken over at points in time set by the Self-Government authorities after negotiations with the central authorities of the realm. These are areas such as the mineral resource area, criminal law as well as police and prosecution service (list 2 in the Act).²⁵ Once a policy area is taken over, the Greenlandic Self-Government gets the legislative and executive competences, and it also assumes the financial responsibility for that area.²⁶ Still, it is not constitutionally possible for Greenland to take over responsibility for all policy areas. Hence, the Self-Government cannot take over control of matters concerning the Danish Constitution, citizenship, the Danish Supreme Court,²⁷ monetary policy, foreign policy, security, and defense policy.

The areas of specific interest to us here are the areas of foreign policy, security, and defense. According to Article 19, Part 1, first sentence, of the Danish Constitution, foreign policy is a royal prerogative.²⁸ Today, royal prerogatives are carried out by the Danish government.²⁹ For important decisions in this field, the government must have the consent of a simple majority of parliament.³⁰ Therefore, as long as Greenland is part of the Danish Realm, the main responsibility for foreign affairs will lie with the Danish government and parliament. However, several steps have been taken to provide Greenland with influence in this area. It is now possible for the Greenlandic Self-Government to, on behalf of the realm, negotiate and conclude agreements under international law with foreign states and international organizations, including administrative agreements which exclusively concern Greenland and entirely relate to fields of responsibility taken over by

25. Act on Greenland Self-Government, Act No. 473, at art. 2 (2009).

26. *Ibid.*, at art. 6.

27. Which is thus the principal court of the entire realm.

28. Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, at art. 19, § 1, first sentence (1953).

29. This is based on Article 14 of the Danish Constitution and a constitutional convention.

30. Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, at art. 19, § 1, second sentence.

Greenland.³¹ Furthermore, the Danish government shall inform the Greenlandic government before negotiating international agreements that are of particular importance to Greenland, even if it is an agreement in an area Greenland cannot take over, and the Danish government must ask Greenland for comments on such international agreements.³²

Finally, a recent decision by the so-called Article 6, Part 2, Committee regarding the competence of the Faroe Islands Home Government regarding membership of WTO is also interesting regarding Greenland.³³ It will be too comprehensive to go into the underlying arguments for the decision here, but the decision may have an impact on Greenland as well in the future. With this decision, it seems that, like the Faroe Islands, Greenland would, within Article 19 of the Danish Constitution, be able to become a member of the WTO in its own name as a separate customs territory, and perhaps also other international organizations that share the same design as the WTO.

Sometimes, it can be difficult to draw the line between areas that have been transferred to Greenland and competences that remain with the Danish authorities. Greenland took over responsibility for the area of mineral resources in 2010. Yet, this policy area may occasionally intersect with areas of foreign and security policy, which Denmark is still in charge of. For example, due to the global demand for certain minerals or because uranium can be a main product or a by-product of mineral exploitation, policy areas that originally had no security implications can suddenly become a security interest. Especially, during new security risks and new forms of war, such as hybrid war. Below, in accordance with the political science literature, we term these ‘grey areas,’ and, as we show in the section below, the content and borders of these have been highly contested.

2.2 Political Practices

Though Denmark formally holds power in the areas of foreign, security, and defense policy, international relations scholarship shows that Greenland’s room for maneuver in these areas has grown considerably throughout recent decades. For example, Sara Olsvig has recently summed up the relationship of Denmark and Greenland in the area of foreign affairs as such: “although the delineations of authority may seem clear from a traditional constitutional legal point of view . . . Greenland has created ambiguity in what lies under Danish or Greenlandic authority.”³⁴ Similarly, Rasmus Leander Nielsen and Jeppe Strandsbjerg conclude that “Whereas, formally, the prerogative of foreign and security policy *de jure* rest in Copenhagen . . . Greenland also has an emerging *de facto* say in security and defense policy.”³⁵

In analyzing Greenland’s room for action in foreign affairs, current scholarship has especially studied political negotiations and diplomatic incidents. In these practices and incidents, the Greenlandic room for action in foreign affairs has shown itself to be larger than one would assume if studying the legal documents only. For example, Rebecca Adler-Nissen illustrates how the double shame of post-colonization—“On the one hand, Greenland and the Faroes are ashamed of their colonial past. On the other hand, Danes former colonizers are ashamed of having been colonizers”³⁶—as well as the awkwardness that follows from this shared past, make Danish, Greenlandic, and Faroese diplomats act “as if they are equal.”³⁷ This way, the former colonies gain more influence on the foreign affairs of the realm of Denmark than their relative, formal capabilities would allow.³⁸ In a similar vein, Olsvig shows that Greenland has positioned itself in a more direct, bilateral relationship with the United States than we would assume, if reading the Constitution only,³⁹ and

31. Act on Greenland Self-Government, at art. 12.

32. *Ibid.*, at art. 13.

33. See Home Rule Act, Act No. 137, at art. 6 (1948).

34. Olsvig, “Odd Couples’ Win-Sets,” 95.

35. Rasmus Leander Nielsen and Jeppe Strandsbjerg, “‘Nothing about Us without Us’: What Can We Learn from Greenland’s New ‘Arctic Strategy’ 2024-2033?,” in *Arctic Yearbook 2024*, ed. Lassi Heininen, Justin Barnes, and Heather Exner-Pirot (University of the Arctic, 2024), 12.

36. Adler-Nissen, *Diplomacy as Impression Management*, 10.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. Olsvig, “Greenland’s Ambiguous Action Space”; see also Olsvig, “Odd Couples’ Win-Sets.”

Marc Jacobsen concludes that “Greenlandic representatives have expanded Greenland’s foreign policy room for maneuver within the current legal frameworks (the constitutional rules) by playing sovereign games through articulating, acting and appearing in a position more separate from Denmark.”⁴⁰ Hence, Greenland seems to have extended its room for maneuvering in decision making in a way “which intersects with the providence of a sovereign state.”⁴¹ Specifically, the country went from having dealt bilaterally with the United States in areas of business development and resource management, which had been taken over from Denmark, “to dealing with military issues, which had previously been dealt with in a strictly trilateral negotiation and under the auspices of the Permanent and Joint committees.”⁴² She reaches a similar conclusion when studying the negotiations among the Danish political parties on the so-called ‘Arctic capacity package’ during 2021, which allocated military capacity to Greenland.⁴³ Yet in a few cases—especially where the American government has articulated specific interests—decisions in areas of foreign policy and security have remained more strictly under Danish jurisdiction in both a formal and practical sense.⁴⁴

A very recent development within the relation of Greenland and Denmark in foreign affairs is the release of the Greenlandic independent strategy titled “Greenland in the World: Nothing About Us Without Us,” which sets forth the country’s overall strategy in foreign affairs, security, and defense from 2024 to 2033.⁴⁵ The strategy is the first *comprehensive* description of Greenland’s aspiration within the domain of security and defense policy, and, as the name of the strategy suggests, Leander Nielsen and Strandsbjerg conclude that “the strategy should be read as Greenland’s desire to perform an own voice alluding more independent international agency than what can be derived from the legal and constitutional framework of the KoD [Kingdom of Denmark].”⁴⁶

2.3 Conclusion on Competences in Foreign Affairs

In areas of foreign affairs, security, and defense, Denmark is officially in charge. Yet, when such politics involves Greenland, Greenland’s recent strategy as well as recent Danish-Greenlandic practices suggest that Greenland should be involved. This involvement seems to mean that Greenland should have a place at the table; however, it does not mean that the Greenlandic interests are always followed, especially not when they collide with the interests of the United States.

3 A Diplomatic Extreme?

In this section, we first assess if the claims made by the American president from December 2024 to January 2025 can be characterized as a diplomatic extreme. Hereafter, we study how government actors presented the claims of the president to determine if securitizations of these claims took place.

3.1 Legal Content of the American Presidents’ Claims

On social media, U.S. President Donald Trump disputed Danish sovereignty over Greenland as part of his rhetoric regarding possible American annexation of Greenland. In an interview on January 7, 2025 at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, he stated “People don’t even know if Denmark has

40. Marc Jacobsen, “Greenland’s Arctic Advantage,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 55, no. 2 (2020): 170–192.

41. Olsvig, “Odd Couples’ Win-Sets,” 97.

42. Ibid.

43. Olsvig, “Greenland’s Ambiguous Action Space.”

44. Ibid., 224; and Sara Olsvig and Rasmus Leander Nielsen, “Da Trump Ville Købe Grønland,” *Udenrigs*, no. 3 (2019): 82.

45. Naalakkersuisut, Grønland i Verden: ‘Intet Om Os, Uden Os’ — Grønlands Udenrigs-, Sikkerheds- og Forsvarspolitiske Strategi for 2024–2033, *En Arktisk Strategi* (2024).

46. Nielsen and Strandsbjerg, “‘Nothing about Us without Us,’” 5.

any legal rights to it [Greenland].”⁴⁷ This is the same interview where he stated that he could not rule out the use of military force or economic coercion against Greenland (and Panama).⁴⁸ His main arguments were economic security (of the United States) and, later in the interview, national security.⁴⁹ International security has also appeared among Trump’s arguments for why the United States needs control of Greenland. On December 22, 2024 on Truth Social he argued, “For purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the World, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity.”⁵⁰ In an address to the U.S. Congress on March 4, 2025, he argues “We need Greenland for national security and even international security,” and “But we need it really for international world security.”⁵¹ Other arguments he makes in the address are that “We will keep you safe, we will make you richer together, we will take Greenland to heights like you have never thought possible before,” and U.S. control is “Important for military security.”⁵²

In this part of the article, the extremity of Trump’s rhetoric is shown through a legal analysis of relations between Greenland, Denmark, and the United States. Two aspects are especially important. First, it is necessary to explain the constitutional relationship between Greenland and Denmark. This includes the constitutional design of the Kingdom of Denmark and the Act on self-rule. Second, the relationship between the Kingdom of Denmark and the United States will be explained in relation to Greenland. This includes important treaties and international agreements between the United States, Denmark, and Greenland. Based on the legal analysis, it is possible to evaluate the American president’s political claims through a legal lens. Do they respect constitutionalism, international law, and rule of law? Or do they rather reflect extreme political and diplomatic behavior towards a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally, detached from legal reality (and history), i.e., do they take the form of a diplomatic extreme? Three arguments will be made in order to show the extremity of the U.S. diplomacy as reflected through the rhetoric of the American president. First, the American rhetoric is extreme because it does not respect constitutionalism. Second, it is extreme because it does not respect international agreements between the United States and Denmark. Third, it is extreme because the needs of the United States to protect its own security, and the security of others, are already safeguarded by defense agreements between the United States and Denmark and the Self-Government of Greenland, which refer to NATO cooperation. Hence, the claimed need for national security is a false need.

3.1.1 Constitutional Relationship between Greenland and Denmark

Today, the Danish Realm—the Kingdom of Denmark—consists of Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. Greenland was colonized by the Danish-Norwegian priest Hans Egede in 1721, who wanted to bring the Christian faith to the native Inuit population⁵³ and also saw a promising prospect for trade, especially through fishing and sealing in the Greenlandic territorial waters.⁵⁴ The Danish King supported Egede in his efforts.⁵⁵ Up until 1953, Greenland remained a Danish

47. Alys Davis and Mike Wendling, “Trump Ramps Up Threats to Gain Control of Greenland and Panama Canal,” *BBC*, January 8, 2025, www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gzn48jwz2o, 0:08 minutes into the video.

48. Reuters, “‘We Need Them’: Trump Vows to Take Panama Canal and Greenland – Video Report,” *The Guardian*, January 7, 2025, www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2025/jan/07/trump-vows-to-gain-control-of-panama-canal-and-greenland-for-national-security-video-report, 0:21 minutes into the video.

49. Reuters, 1:09 minutes into the video.

50. Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), “I am pleased to announce Ken Howery as my choice for United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark,” *Truth Social*, December 22, 2024, <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/113698764270730405>.

51. Associated Press, “Trump: US ‘Needs Greenland for International Security,’ Tells Them ‘We Will Make You Rich,’” *MassLive*, March 5, 2025, www.youtube.com/watch?v=1znuidob4aQ, 0:20 minutes into the video.

52. Associated Press, 0:35 and 0:50 minutes into the video.

53. The people of Greenland are predominantly Inuit, who are considered an Indigenous people under international law. See Vibe Ulfbeck, Anders Møllmann, and Bent Ole Gram Mortensen, *Responsibilities and Liabilities for Commercial Activity in the Arctic: The Example of Greenland* (Routledge, 2016).

54. Erik Beukel, Frede P. Jensen, and Jens Elo Rytter, *Phasing Out the Colonial Status of Greenland, 1945-1954: A Historical Study* (Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010), 13.

55. *Ibid.*

colony.⁵⁶ In the most recent revision of the Danish Constitution in 1953, Greenland was legally integrated as a part of Denmark.⁵⁷ In 1954, the United Nations General Assembly removed Greenland from the list of non-self-governing territories in Resolution 849 (IX) of November 22, 1954.⁵⁸ Until 1979, Greenland was divided into three Danish counties,⁵⁹ which were formally completely integrated in Denmark.

Article 1 of the Danish Constitution states that “This Constitution applies to all parts of the Danish Realm.”⁶⁰ According to the preparatory works, the Danish Realm consists of Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands.⁶¹ The purpose of Article 1 was to bring Greenland under the Danish Constitution. This means that Greenland is bound by the Danish Constitution.⁶² Greenland was given parliamentary representation. According to Article 28 of the Danish Constitution, the Danish Parliament has 179 members, of which two are elected in Greenland and two in the Faroe Islands.⁶³ The mentioned Articles were inserted into the Constitution in 1953, and the Constitution has not been amended since 1953. In 1979, some autonomy was granted to Greenland by the enactment of the Home Rule Act.⁶⁴ The Home Rule Act was preceded by an indicative referendum held in Greenland in which 70.1 percent of the Greenlandic population voted in favor of home rule. At this point, Greenland for the first time got its own parliament and administration. Furthermore, the Home Rule Act made it possible for the home rule to take over certain policy areas from the Danish authorities as regards domestic Greenland. Danish was still the official language in Greenland.

In 2009, the home rule evolved even further into self-government.⁶⁵ Once again, an indicative referendum was held in 2008 in which 75.5 percent of the Greenlandic voters were in favor of self-government. The Self-Government Act repealed the Home Rule Act and introduced even more autonomy to the Greenlandic authorities, making more policy areas open to take over by the Greenlandic authorities. Furthermore, as mentioned, the role of Greenland in foreign policy matters was strengthened,⁶⁶ and the Greenlandic People were recognized as a people with the right to self-determination under international law. Finally, a process for independence was described.⁶⁷ If the Greenlandic people decide to become independent, the Danish government will enter into negotiations with the Greenlandic government on an agreement. This agreement must be accepted by the Greenlandic people in a referendum.⁶⁸ Independence would entail full sovereignty over the Greenland territory.⁶⁹ The Danish parliament will have to consent to such an agreement.⁷⁰ It has been debated in the literature whether the procedure described in the Self-Government Act is sufficient for Greenland to obtain independence or whether a constitutional amendment would be necessary.⁷¹

56. Ulfbeck, Møllmann, and Mortensen, *Responsibilities and Liabilities*.

57. For a detailed examination of the decolonization of Greenland, see Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, *Phasing Out the Colonial Status*.

58. See also Ulfbeck, Møllmann, and Mortensen, *Responsibilities and Liabilities*.

59. East Greenland, North Greenland, and West Greenland.

60. Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, at art. 1.

61. See Forfatningskommissionen af 1953, *Betænkning afgivet af Forfatningskommissionen af 1953* (J. H. Schultz A/S, 1953), 28.

62. Ibid., 28, 86ff; and Ole Spiermann, *Danmarks Rige i forfatningsretlig belysning* (Jurist- og Økonomforbundets Forlag, 2007), 62. As regards Article 31, Part 5, Article 32, Part 5, Article 42, Part 8, and Article 71, Part 3, and Article 86, second sentence of the Danish Constitution, deviations can be made according to legislation.

63. Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, at art. 28.

64. Home Rule Act.

65. Act on Greenland Self-Government.

66. Ulfbeck, Møllmann, and Mortensen, *Responsibilities and Liabilities*.

67. Act on Greenland Self-Government, at art. 21.

68. Ibid., at art. 21, part 3.

69. Ulfbeck, Møllmann, and Mortensen, *Responsibilities and Liabilities*.

70. Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, at art. 19.

71. See the recent debate in Rasmus Smith Nielsen, “Selvstændighedsbestemmelsen i selvstyreloven for Grønland i et stats- og folkeretligt perspektiv,” *UfR Online* U.2024B.165 (2024); Jørgen Albæk Jensen, “Kræver Grønlands selvstændighed en ændring af grundloven?,” *UfR Online* U.2025B.39 (2025); Rasmus Smith Nielsen, “Duplik til Jørgen Aalbæk Jensen om Grønlands manglende adgang til fuld selvstændighed uden en grundlovsændring,” *UfR Online* U.2025B.91 (2025); and Jørgen Albæk Jensen and Ole Spiermann, “Selvstændighed for Grønland i

Finally, it has been argued in constitutional literature that home rule and self-government violate Article 3 in the Danish Constitution, according to which “Legislative authority shall be vested in the King and the Parliament conjointly”⁷² (the ‘King’ is nowadays interpreted as the government). It has, however, also been argued that home rule and self-government can no longer be considered unconstitutional due to the appearance of a legally binding constitutional convention which departs from Article 3 and gives the Greenlandic authorities legislative competence in certain areas.⁷³ Based on constitutional provisions other than Article 3 and the precondition of the unity of the realm, certain areas cannot be transferred to the Greenlandic authorities, for instance, citizenship, the Danish Supreme Court, foreign policy, security and defense policy, and monetary policy.⁷⁴

As follows, Greenlandic autonomy was granted in legislation (not the Constitution). The Home Rule Act from 1979⁷⁵ as well as the current Self-Government Act from 2009⁷⁶ were passed by the Danish Parliament through simple majority votes. Therefore, it has been argued that the Danish legislators could formally take back or amend the Greenlandic autonomy by a simple majority vote. This is based on a delegation argument, according to which competence has been delegated to Greenland.⁷⁷ However, the political reality is different from this legal standpoint, and it would be very difficult to roll back the self-government which Greenland is now provided with. Furthermore, as mentioned, parts of constitutional literature have argued that a constitutional convention has developed which provides the Greenlandic home rule/self-government with constitutional status, and this would potentially mean that ordinary legislation is not enough to take back these competences.⁷⁸ Finally, it has been argued that it would not be in accordance with international law to take back autonomy from Greenland.⁷⁹ In conclusion, there might be constitutional and international legal obstacles to rolling back the Greenlandic self-government, and the political reality would certainly make it difficult.

Consequently, from a legal perspective, the applied rhetoric by the American president regarding Greenland can be characterized as a diplomatic extreme, since the claim to control Greenland lacks respect for the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, which includes Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. Furthermore, the President’s political claim to Greenland does not respect the Self-Government Act of 2009.⁸⁰ It clearly follows from the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark from 1953 that Greenland is part of the Danish Realm⁸¹ and that foreign affairs is a governmental prerogative.⁸²

3.1.2 The Legal Relationship between the Kingdom of Denmark and the United States as regards Greenland

Surprisingly, an important legal document on the U.S.-Danish relationship regarding Greenland is part of the convention that regulated the Danish sale of the Virgin Islands to the United States in 1917. The Virgin Islands—or “Danish West Indies”—were Danish-Norwegian colonies since 1672

forfatningsretlig belysning – afsluttende bemærkninger,” *UfR Online* U.2025B.160 (2025).

72. Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, at art. 3.

73. See Spiermann, *Danmarks Rige*, 69ff.

74. *Ibid.*, 108ff.

75. Act on Greenland Home-Rule, No. 577 (1978).

76. Act on Greenland Self-Government.

77. Alf Ross, *Dansk Statsforfatningsret*, 3rd edition, vol. 2 (Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1980), 469.

78. See also Frederik Harhoff, *Rigsfællesskabet* (KLIM, 1993), though with a different argumentation. Harhoff argues that Home Rule/Self Rule represents a constitutional transfer of competence, which can only be withdrawn through a qualified procedure in cooperation with the Home Rule Government, now the Self Rule Government.

79. See Ulfbeck, Møllmann, and Mortensen, *Responsibilities and Liabilities*; and Ole Spiermann, “Vores grundlovstridige hjemmestyreordninger,” *Juristen*, no. 1 (2008): 14, with further references in Spiermann, *Danmarks Rige*.

80. Act on Greenland Self-Government.

81. Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, at art. 1.

82. *Ibid.*, at art. 19, § 1, first sentence.

(Sankt Thomas), 1718 (Sankt Jan), and 1733 (Sankt Croix).⁸³ Danish-Norwegian ships had been present in this area since the mid-seventeenth century. The sovereignty of the islands is part of the dark chapter in Danish history as a country that had colonies. Slavery was formally abandoned in 1792, and de facto in 1848. The Danish government attempted to sell the islands to the United States in 1902; however, one of the two chambers of the Danish Parliament refused to consent to this. In 1917, Denmark finally sold the Virgin Islands (“Danish West Indies”) to the United States. The purchase and transfer of the Virgin Islands was legally handled through a convention.⁸⁴ The convention was signed on August 4, 1916 in New York City, ratified by Denmark on December 22, 1916, and by the American president on January 16, 1917. The Virgin Islands were transferred to the United States on March 31, 1917. As a condition of the sale, Denmark required that the United States recognize Danish sovereignty over the whole island of Greenland. This condition was codified with the convention through a U.S. declaration regarding Greenland. The declaration was signed on behalf of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson by the U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing, and has the following wording:

DECLARATION

In proceeding this day to the signature of the Convention respecting the cession of the Danish West-Indian Islands to the United States of America, the undersigned Secretary of State of the United States of America, duly authorized by his Government, has the honor to declare that the Government of the United States of America will not object to the Danish Government extending their political and economic interests to the whole of Greenland.⁸⁵

This means that the United States has recognized Danish political and economic interest in Greenland in a declaration to the convention on the sale and transfer of the Virgin Islands from Denmark to the United States. Until now, the United States has respected Danish sovereignty over Greenland. This is, for instance, reflected in the U.S. offer in 1946 to buy Greenland (an offer that was turned down by the Danish State) and the agreements on defense, which are discussed below, as well as Trump’s offer to buy Greenland from Denmark in 2019.

Before turning to the defense agreements between Denmark and the United States, another important legal document regarding Danish sovereignty of Greenland is highlighted. In 1931, Norway attempted to annex Eastern Greenland. The dispute was brought before the International Court of Justice, which ruled in favor of Denmark, concluding that Denmark has had sovereignty of all of Greenland since the fourteenth century.⁸⁶ In this way, Danish sovereignty of Eastern Greenland was legally confirmed by the International Court of Justice.

The history of defense agreements between Denmark and the United States was off to a rather peculiar start when the Danish diplomat in Washington, DC, Henrik Kaufmann, independently signed an agreement with the United States on behalf of Denmark on April 13, 1941.⁸⁷ This was during the Second World War, and Denmark was occupied by Germany from 1940 to 1945. The purpose of the agreement was to protect Greenland against Germany and to secure supplies to Greenland. However, the agreement also allowed the United States to establish airports, harbors,

83. Danmarkshistorien Lex, “De Vestindiske Øer, 1672-1917,” accessed October 2, 2025, https://danmarkshistorien.lex.dk/De_Vestindiske_%C3%98er,_1672-1917.

84. Convention - Denmark, at 1707-1717 (Aug. 4, 1916).

85. Declaration (Aug. 4, 1916).

86. See International Court of Justice, Legal Status of Eastern Greenland (Denmark against Norway), ICJ Report of Judgment 53, at 64 (Apr. 5, 1933); International Court of Justice, Legal Status of the South-Eastern Territory of Greenland (Denmark against Norway), ICJ Order 52 and 53, Request for the Indication of Interim Measures of Protection (Aug. 3, 1932); and International Court of Justice, Legal Status of the South-Eastern Territory of Greenland (Denmark against Norway), ICJ Order 52 and 53 (Aug. 2, 1932). On the legal argumentation in the judgment, see for instance Jacques Hartman, “Siriuspatruljen vogter ikke over dansk suverænitet i Grønland,” *Altinget*, January 23, 2025, www.alinget.dk/forsvar/artikel/juraprofessor-siriuspatruljen-vogter-ikke-over-dansk-suverænitet-i-groenland.

87. The United States and Denmark, Agreement between the United States of America and Denmark Relating to the Defense of Greenland, No. 4792 (Apr. 9, 1941).

and military bases in Greenland.⁸⁸ Article 1 of the 1941 defense agreement states that the United States “reiterates its recognition of and respect for the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Denmark over Greenland.”⁸⁹ This is followed up in Article 4, according to which, “The Kingdom of Denmark retains sovereignty over the defense areas mentioned in the preceding articles.”⁹⁰ Determination of the agreement is treated in Article 10. Since the agreement was not approved by the Danish state, Kaufmann was later fired and accused of treason. Furthermore, Denmark declared the agreement invalid. However, the United States ignored this and established military facilities in Greenland. Denmark also tried to repeal the agreement without luck and ended up ratifying the agreement.⁹¹

In 1951, Denmark and the United States entered into the “Defense of Greenland: Agreement Between the United States and the Kingdom of Denmark, April 27, 1951.”⁹² The agreement is interesting from several perspectives.

First, the agreement is closely tied to NATO cooperation, which was established by the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. This is clear throughout the agreement, from the preamble to the last article. For instance, the preamble reads:

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark, being parties to the North Atlantic Treaty signed at Washington on April 4, 1949 having regard to their responsibilities thereunder for the defense of the North Atlantic Treaty area, desiring to contribute to such defense and thereby to their own defense in accordance with the principles of self-help and mutual aid, and having been requested by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to negotiate arrangements under which armed forces of the parties to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization may make use of facilities in Greenland in defense of Greenland and the rest of the North Atlantic Treaty area, have entered into an Agreement for the benefit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in terms as set forth below.⁹³

And Article 1 reads:

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark, in order to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic Treaty area by uniting their efforts for collective defense and for the preservation of peace and security and for the development of their collective capacity to resist armed attack, will each take such measures as are necessary or appropriate to carry out expeditiously their respective and joint responsibilities in Greenland, in accordance with NATO plans.⁹⁴

And Article 14 reads: “This Agreement, being in implementation of the North Atlantic Treaty, shall remain in effect for the duration of the North Atlantic Treaty.”⁹⁵

Hence, the cooperation on the defense of Greenland is part of the NATO cooperation. This means that if the United States or Denmark left NATO, the agreement would be brought to an end. From this follows that U.S. presence and military bases that the agreement allows would no longer be permitted. The fact that the agreement is part of the NATO cooperation means that the argument put forward by Trump—that because Denmark is not able to defend Greenland sufficiently on its own, the United States needs to control Greenland—is not valid since the idea of NATO is that the parties to the treaty assist each other. This clearly follows from Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.⁹⁶

88. *Ibid.*, at arts. 2 and 3; and Danmarkshistorien Lex, “Forsvarsaftale for 1941,” accessed October 2, 2025, https://lex.dk/Forsvarsaftale_for_Gr%C3%B8nland_af_1941.

89. Defense of Greenland Agreement (1941), at art. 1.

90. *Ibid.*, at art. 4.

91. Danmarkshistorien Lex, “Forsvarsaftale.”

92. Defense of Greenland: Agreement Between the United States and the Kingdom of Denmark, April 27, 1951 (1951).

93. *Ibid.*, at preamble.

94. *Ibid.*, at art. 1.

95. *Ibid.*, at art. 14.

96. North Atlantic Treaty (Apr. 4, 1949).

Second, it is interesting that Danish sovereignty over Greenland is underlined in the agreement. This follows, for instance, from Article 2, part 3, b:

(b) Without prejudice to the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Denmark over such defense area and the natural right of the competent Danish authorities to free movement everywhere in Greenland, the Government of the United States of America, without compensation to the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark, shall be entitled within such defense area and the air spaces and waters adjacent thereto:

- (i) to improve and generally to fit the area for military use;
- (ii) to construct, install, maintain, and operate facilities and equipment, including meteorological and communications facilities and equipment, and to store supplies;
- (iii) to station and house personnel and to provide for their health, recreation and welfare;
- (iv) to provide for the protection and internal security of the area;
- (v) to establish and maintain postal facilities and commissary stores;
- (vi) to control landings, takeoffs, anchorages, moorings, movements, and operation of ships, aircraft, and water-borne craft and vehicles, with due respect for the responsibilities of the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark in regard to shipping and aviation;
- (vii) to improve and deepen harbors, channels, entrances, and anchorages.

Third, the purpose of the agreement is “to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic Treaty area,” as stated in Article 1.⁹⁷ Clearly, the purpose is to promote security within NATO, including U.S. security, and thereby the agreement serves the same purposes regarding national and international security as Trump has mentioned as reasons why the United States needs to ‘control’ Greenland and use economic and military power if necessary.

Fourth, the agreement specifically mentions in Article 2, that the U.S. assistance is linked to when Denmark is unable to operate singlehandedly:

In order that the Government of the United States of America as a party to the North Atlantic Treaty may assist the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark by establishing and/or operating such defense areas as the two Governments, on the basis of NATO defense plans, may from time to time agree to be necessary for the development of the defense of Greenland and the rest of the North Atlantic Treaty area, and which the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark is unable to establish and operate singlehanded, the two Governments in respect of the defense areas thus selected, agree to the following⁹⁸

This is interesting because Trump has argued that, because Denmark is not able to defend Greenland sufficiently, the United States needs to control Greenland.

Fifth, the agreement provides the United States with several functions which it is allowed to carry out as part of the cooperation between Denmark and Greenland on the defense of Greenland, including establishing and running military facilities in Greenland.⁹⁹

Hence, since the 1951 defense agreement, the United States has been provided with broad possibilities of defending Greenland and the United States, and therefore, one may question why the American President sees it as necessary for the United States to control Greenland to protect U.S. national security, Greenlandic security, and international security. The 1951 defense agreement

97. Defense of Greenland Agreement (1951), at art. 1.

98. *Ibid.*, at art. 2.

99. *Ibid.*

was amended and supplemented by the Igaliku agreement from 2004, which was signed on April 14 and entered into force on August 6, 2004.¹⁰⁰

The Igaliku agreement is based on “the change of Greenland’s status from colony to that of an equal part of the Kingdom of Denmark under the Constitution and the establishment of a wide ranging Greenland Home Rule; Considering that the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark always consults and cooperates closely with the Home Rule Government of Greenland in affairs of state of particular importance to Greenland.”¹⁰¹ Interestingly, it is mentioned that the Igaliku agreement also refers to “United States military activities since the conclusion of the Defense Agreement, including the reduction of defense areas in Greenland.”¹⁰² The common goal of the parties is underlined as that:

of international peace and peaceful co-existence, and respecting the important contribution of Greenland to this end; Acknowledging Greenland’s contribution to the mutual security interests and its consequent sharing of the associated risks and responsibilities, and the commitment of the Parties to continuing close cooperation within NATO in ensuring North Atlantic security.¹⁰³

The Igaliku agreement is signed by the American secretary of state on behalf of the United States. On behalf of the Kingdom of Denmark, including the Home Rule Government of Greenland, the agreement is signed by the Danish foreign affairs minister for the Government of Denmark and by the Home Rule Government of Greenland.

The main purpose of the Igaliku agreement from 2004 is to reflect Greenlandic home rule and to support and enhance local cooperation. Hence, also after this amendment and supplement to the 1951 defense agreement, the United States has broad competences and possibilities to protect American national security, Greenlandic security, and international security in cooperation with the Kingdom of Denmark, including the Home Rule Government (now Self-Government) of Greenland. In light of that, it is difficult to see why the United States needs control of Greenland in order to defend the mentioned interest. In fact, the United States has chosen to dramatically decrease the number of American soldiers in Greenland.¹⁰⁴

3.1.3 Conclusion

In sum, from a legal perspective, the American president’s claim that the United States needs and wants to control Greenland can be characterized as a diplomatic extreme. First, according to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark, the realm includes Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands. It would be a sovereignty violation to take over Greenland by military force and the president’s claim does not respect constitutionalism. Second, as illustrated, several internationally binding documents show that the United States has historically recognized the Danish claim to Greenland. Therefore, the claims of the president do not respect international agreements between the United States and Denmark. Finally, the defense agreements provide the United States with extensive room to protect national, Greenlandic, and international security as part of the NATO

100. Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark, Including the Home Rule Government of Greenland, To Amend And Supplement the Agreement of 27 April 1951 Pursuant to the North Atlantic Treaty Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark Concerning the Defense of Greenland (Defense Agreement) [hereinafter Igaliku Agreement] (Aug. 6, 2004). In 2003, it was also agreed to separate Dundas from the defense areas at Thule. See Bekendtgørelse af aftalememorandum af 20. februar 2003 med Amerikas Forenede Stater vedrørende udskillelsen af Dundas fra forsvarsområdet ved Thule [hereinafter Dundas Memorandum] (Aug. 21, 2003).

101. Igaliku Agreement.

102. Ibid.

103. Ibid.

104. The United States had approximately 10,000 soldiers based in Greenland during the Cold War whereas today it is only around 140 soldiers. See Berlingske, “FAKTA: Derfor er militærbasen i Grønland vigtig for USA,” *Berlingske*, March 28, 2025, www.berlingske.dk/politik/fakta-derfor-er-militaerbasen-i-groenland-vigtig-for-usa; and USA Facts, “Where Are US Troops Stationed?,” <https://usafacts.org/articles/where-are-us-military-members-stationed-and-why>.

cooperation. Hence, from a legal perspective, nothing suggests that the United States needs to control Greenland for reasons of security,

3.2 Securitizations

3.2.1 Greenlandic and Danish Government Leaders

We now turn to study whether the claims of American government actors from December 2025 to January 2025 were constructed by Danish and Greenlandic leaders as a threat to security.

Overall, the posts of Danish and Greenlandic government actors characterize the claims of the American president as a threat. Mostly, this is done implicitly. Hence, rather than stating that ‘an American annexation of Greenland is possible,’ the actors prefer to characterize the threat in more abstract terms, e.g., by describing ‘the situation’ through adjectives such as ‘serious,’ ‘difficult,’ ‘unreal,’ ‘unpredictable,’ or as introducing ‘a new, more dangerous era.’ For example, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen notes:

Dear all,

For almost two weeks, we, Greenlanders and Danes, have found ourselves in an unfamiliar and intense foreign policy situation . . . therefore, I expect that we, as Europeans, must navigate a new reality¹⁰⁵

Likewise, the Greenlandic leaders often characterize the threat indirectly, by referring to the—potential—emotions that would follow from the claims of the American president. Emotions, they may have experienced among themselves or among the Greenlandic citizens. For example, the period’s first Greenlandic prime minister, Múte B. Egede, writes on Facebook:

Recent events have affected all of us. Many of you who have reached out to me have shared your feelings of uncertainty — and I completely understand that.¹⁰⁶

I fully understand that people are worried. We are currently experiencing something we have never experienced before.¹⁰⁷

I completely understand if some are feeling uneasy. When high-ranking foreign officials enter our country on what are described as private visits, it is only natural that this raises concern.¹⁰⁸

Also, the Danish prime minister writes of the threat as causing fear among citizens in society:

I completely understand if, at one moment, you feel worried — and the next, you feel relieved.¹⁰⁹

And, the newly elected prime minister of Greenland, Jens-Frederik Nielsen, stresses the people’s feeling of security and assurance as being his priority:

105. Mette Frederiksen (@mettefrederikson.dk), “For almost two weeks, we, Greenlanders and Danes, have found ourselves in an unfamiliar and intense foreign policy situation,” *Facebook*, January 20, 2025.

106. Múte B. Egede (@mutebegede), “Recent events have affected all of us. Many of you who have reached out to me have shared your feelings of uncertainty — and I completely understand that,” *Facebook*, January 26, 2025.

107. Múte B. Egede (@mutebegede), “I fully understand that people are worried. We are currently experiencing something we have never experienced before,” *Facebook*, March 24, 2025.

108. Múte B. Egede (@mutebegede), “I completely understand if some are feeling uneasy. When high-ranking foreign officials enter our country on what are described as private visits, it is only natural that this raises concern,” *Facebook*, March 24, 2025.

109. Mette Frederiksen (@mettefrederikson.dk), “I completely understand if, at one moment, you feel worried — and the next, you feel relieved,” *Facebook*, March 26, 2025.

We are protecting our country

. . . . My most important responsibility at this time is to create a sense of security — for those of you who are following events and have questions, and for those who wonder whether decisions are being made over our heads. They are not. And they will not be.¹¹⁰

I will always put the safety and confidence of our people first.

We are now entering a new phase — one of calm, stability, and reassurance.

And with a shared goal: to build the foundation of a country where we can live safely, take part in the decisions that shape us, and believe in the future.¹¹¹

In sum, the emotional narratives offered by Greenlandic and Danish government actors set forth the American president's claims as a threat. Yet, rather than constructing the United States—a formal ally of the Realm—as ‘a threatening other,’ the ministers securitize the threat more indirectly. However, there are important differences too. For example, the Danish prime minister mentions the threat more often than her Greenlandic counterpart, Múte B. Egede, who is the prime minister during the most intense part of the period. Also, as evident above, the Danish prime minister characterizes the American threat as the beginning of a new, threatening era, whereas the newly elected Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen speaks of Greenland as “entering a new phase—one of calm, stability, and reassurance,” the day the new government is formed.

The ‘we’ that is characterized as being threatened in the posts of the Greenlandic and Danish government leaders is strikingly different. In these and other posts, the main object referent of the Danish prime minister and Danish minister of foreign affairs is “the Danish realm” or “we, Greenlanders and Danes”—which is sometimes illustrated by following the text with emojis of the Danish and Greenlandic flags. Occasionally, the Danish prime minister writes directly to “Greenlanders,” thus positioning herself as a friendly ‘other’ while recognizing the differences between Greenlanders and Danes. Yet, in general, she portrays a ‘we’ as consisting of Danes and Greenlanders. In contrast, in Greenlandic leaders’ posts, the ‘we’ that is under threat is Greenland and, quite often, posts use a Greenlandic flag emoji. Especially, the period’s first Greenlandic prime minister, Múte B. Egede, refers to Denmark only seldomly, sometimes aligning Denmark with the United States, as in posts like this one:

Kalaallit Nunaat is ours.

We don’t want to be Americans, nor Danes; We are Kalaallit. The Americans and their leader must understand that. We are not for sale and cannot simply be taken. Our future will be decided by us in Greenland.¹¹²

In this post, Denmark is portrayed as a potential threatening other, in line with the United States—a construction that is far from that of the Danish and Greenlandic ‘we’ made by the Danish government actors.

110. Jens-Frederik Nielsen (@jensfrederiknielsendemokraatit), “We are protecting our country My most important responsibility at this time is to create a sense of security — for those of you who are following events and have questions, and for those who wonder whether decisions are being made over our heads. They are not. And they will not be,” *Facebook*, March 24, 2025.

111. Jens-Frederik Nielsen (@jensfrederiknielsendemokraatit), “I will always put the safety and confidence of our people first

We are now entering a new phase — one of calm, stability, and reassurance. And with a shared goal: to build the foundation of a country where we can live safely, take part in the decisions that shape us, and believe in the future,” *Facebook*, March 28, 2025.

112. Múte B. Egede (@mutebege), “Kalaallit Nunaat is ours. We don’t want to be Americans, nor Danes; We are Kalaallit. The Americans and their leader must understand that. We are not for sale and cannot simply be taken. Our future will be decided by us in Greenland,” *Facebook*, March 5, 2025.

Besides, the ‘we’ that is threatened, both Greenlandic and Danish actors set forth another object that is threatened. Hence, in posts of the Danish prime minister, it is not only the Danish Realm, but “the binding international norms and the principles of democracy” that are being threatened by the American president’s claims. Yet, posts of Greenlandic leaders often set forth Greenlandic internal cooperation and trust as something that is being threatened by the American president’s claims. Accordingly, in the securitizations of the Greenlandic actors, the American president’s claims appear especially threatening because they may cause severe disagreement among the Greenlandic people (polarization even), thus dividing the population. Quite surely, this difference that which is put forth “as being under threat” may explain why the Danish prime minister states that the American claims introduce the beginning of a new, more dangerous era, while the newly elected Greenlandic prime minister states “the beginning of a new phase of calm, stability, and reassurance” the day he steps into office.

3.2.2 Emotional Responses of the Danish and Greenlandic People

In this section, we assess the degree to which the moral audience accepted the political securitizations of the American president’s claims. Because we only have secondary sources, we cannot measure the reaction to the specific constructions of the threatened ‘we’ among the moral audience directly. Yet, the secondary data may still give us some indication of whether or not the emotions and attitudes of this audience are in sync with the emotional narrative of fear that is offered by key government actors. Overall, the data from a poll¹¹³ that was carried out in Greenland suggest that there are synergies between the emotions put forth by the government actors on the one hand and the moral audience on the other. Hence, towards the end of January 2025, when asked if they would want to leave the realm and become part of the United States, 85 percent of Greenlanders answered ‘No,’ while 6 percent wanted to leave the Danish Realm and become part of the United States. The remaining 9 percent were undecided.¹¹⁴

Moving to the correspondence of the feelings of the moral audiences towards the United States and the stories offered by both Greenlandic and Danish government leaders, we find some correspondence. Hence, while 45 percent of Greenlanders perceive the interest of the American president as a threat, the share of Danes who think of the United States as a threat is 41 percent.¹¹⁵ While under half of both populations may not seem like a high number, having around 40 percent of all citizens think of their former, close ally is a threat is indeed a considerable development—and one which corresponds to the narratives offered by the government leaders. Yet, it is worth noticing that the emotions of the Greenlandic population differ, since 43 percent of all Greenlanders do also agree that the American president’s interest is an opportunity for Greenland—a view which is very much against the emotional narrative put forth by especially the Danish but also the Greenlandic government leaders (though less so by the Greenlandic Minister of Foreign Affairs Vivian Motzfeldt).

3.2.3 Conclusion

In sum, we may state that both Danish and Greenlandic government actors securitize the American President’s claims. While Danish leaders present the American president’s claims as threatening the Kingdom of the realm and international law, the Greenlandic leaders stress the threat against Greenland more exclusively, while also setting forth Greenland’s internal cooperative political environment as threatened. Accordingly, the picture of the Danish Realm as a unity (under threat)

113. The Verian survey was conducted in both Danish and Greenlandic (Kalaallisut) and based on web interviews with 497 representatively selected citizens in Greenland aged 18 or over, and was conducted from 22nd to 26th of January 2025. The uncertainty of ‘Yes’ is +/- 2.1 percentage points and on ‘No’ +/- 3.1 percentage points. Camilla Kann Fjeldsøe, “Opinion Poll in Greenland, January 2025,” *Verian*, www.veriangroup.com/news-and-insights/opinion-poll-greenland-2025.

114. Ibid.

115. Ibid.; and Ritzau, “‘Et Fuldstændigt Vildt Tal’: Ny Måling Af Danskernes Syn På USA Chokerer Professor,” 2025, <https://politiken.dk/internationalt/art10320389/Ny-m%C3%A5ling-af-danskernes-syn-p%C3%A5-USA-chokerer-professor>.

is much more evident among Danish leaders than among Greenlandic leaders. Moreover, during the period, Both Greenlandic and Danish citizens hold feelings of fear towards their official ally—the United States—which suggests that emotions of the moral audience in both countries correspond to the securitizations made by the Greenlandic and Danish government leaders. Nevertheless, some Greenlanders see the interest of the United States as a positive opportunity for Greenland.

3.3 Conclusion on Diplomatic Extreme

Above, our legal analysis showed that the claims made by the American president during the period studied can be characterized as a diplomatic extreme. Moreover, because the American president's claims were shared on social media—and therefore accessible for anyone to view and engage with—the two elements of the definition of a diplomatic extreme were fulfilled during December 2024 to January 2025. In turn, our analysis of Danish and Greenlandic actors' social media posts in this period illustrated that both countries' actors securitized the American presidents' claims as a threat, and finally, the moral audience in both Greenland and Denmark generally seemed to accept the idea that the United States posed a threat. This suggests that a successful securitization was carried out by government leaders in both Greenland and Denmark.

4 Expanded Greenlandic Competences in Foreign Affairs?

We now turn to study the claims of Greenlandic and Danish government actors on social media to determine if Greenlandic government actors aspired to enlarge the relative size of Greenlandic competence in foreign policy during this period from December 2024 to January 2025.

4.1 Analyses of Competences in Foreign Affairs

On December 23, 2024, in response to the American president's renewed push to buy Greenland, the Greenlandic prime minister restated the response that became the key Greenlandic and Danish message during 2019 when the American president first announced that he would like to buy Greenland. The prime minister restated that Greenland is not for sale:

Greenland is ours We are not for sale, and we will never be for sale.¹¹⁶

During the next couple of months, this statement was reposted several times and in different variants by Greenlandic government leaders. Yet the social media accounts of the Danish and Greenlandic government leaders illustrate that Denmark was the lead actor in the areas of foreign affairs. Also, they do not show any signs that Greenlandic government actors tried to expand Greenlandic competences in this area. Two circumstances testify to this.

First, in contrast to the Greenlandic strategy on foreign affairs from 2024, which states “Nothing about Greenland without Greenland,” key Danish actors seemingly carry out bilateral talks about Greenland with colleagues from other countries without Greenlandic involvement. Most notably, the Danish prime minister has a bilateral telephone meeting with the American president, and the Danish foreign minister has two bilateral meetings with his American counterpart. Also, the Danish foreign minister is the sole actor in an online speech that speaks out against the American wish to gain ownership of Greenland (among other things). Finally, there is no “on-stage” Greenlandic diplomatic protest to this.

Secondly, the Greenlandic government actors's post do not describe having any similar, direct contact with members or officials of other countries' governments during the period. In fact, besides very few testimonies of meetings with Danish government actors, only one social media post testifies to any activity carried out in relation to another country during the period. This is a post by the period's first Greenlandic prime minister, Múte B. Egede, in which the prime minister states that

¹¹⁶ Múte B. Egede (@mutebege), “Greenland is ours - We are not for sale, and we will never be for sale,” *Facebook*, December 23, 2024.

he has given an interview to the American Fox News on the American president's claims.¹¹⁷ Hence, rather than describing activities geared towards other countries (including Denmark), Greenlandic leaders' activities seem to be oriented towards internal affairs, i.e., ensuring that Greenlanders stand together and that the American president's claims do not give rise to 'party politics.' Accordingly, one of the only activities that is presented to the audience as an action geared towards the potential threat of the American president is the gathering of the leaders of all Greenlandic parties to gain common ground. Jens-Frederik Nielsen testifies to doing this on March 3, 2025, and Múte B. Egede on January 12, 2025.¹¹⁸ This activity matches the securitizations of becoming divided, which, as described in 3.2.1 was presented as a threat by the Greenlandic government leaders.

4.2 Conclusion on Expanded Greenlandic Competences

Despite a situation which was characterized as a situation of threats, which may give rise to the use of politically extraordinary means, our analysis of social media accounts suggests that Greenlandic government actors did not try to expand Greenlandic competences in the areas of foreign affairs during the period in question. Rather, only Danish actors testify to carrying out acts of foreign affairs (besides the first Greenlandic Prime Minister's interview), and Greenlandic government actors do not criticize the Danish government for not involving them in decisions or meetings that are constructed as concerning Greenland. In sum, the foreign policy of Greenland and the Danish Realm during the period we study here seems to be in line with the competences as they are formally described in the Danish Constitution, i.e., as competences that belong to Denmark, rather than the development towards greater Greenlandic competences, which recent political science scholarship has described.

5 Discussion of Findings and the Combined Perspective

In this section, we discuss our findings that, despite a history of having successfully sought to expand its competences in foreign affairs and despite the occurrence of a situation in which extraordinary political means could potentially be applied in a politically legitimate way, the Greenlandic government actors did not try to expand these competences. Hereafter, we discuss the article's theoretical framework.

5.1 Analytical Findings

Why do we not find that the Greenlandic government tried to expand its competences? Below, we discuss our design, our interpretation of the political situation, as well as factors that have to do with the actions of the Danish and the Greenlandic governments.

First of all, studying the posts of government leaders does not provide a full picture of the diplomatic interactions of government actors. Rather, such posts generally testify to what the actors want the public to know of their diplomatic efforts and interactions. However, most politicians aim to set off a picture of themselves as influential. Hence, we would not expect government actors to downplay their interaction with important colleagues, and our zero findings—in the form of almost no Greenlandic interaction with international actors—do probably provide a rather authentic picture of the situation as it unfolded from December 2024 to July 2025, which is the period we study here. Though, this finding is in contrast with our initial theoretical expectation, it does resonate with previous findings of Olsvig that historically, when the American government has articulated specific interests, decision making in areas of foreign policy and security have remained rather strictly under the agency of the Danish government.¹¹⁹ Yet, it is possible that Greenlandic

117. Múte B. Egede (@mutebege), *Facebook*, January 17, 2025.

118. Múte B. Egede (@mutebege), *Facebook*, January 12, 2025 and Jens-Frederik Nielsen (@jensfred-eriknielsendemokraatit), *Facebook*, March 3, 2025.

119. Olsvig, "Greenland's Ambiguous Action Space."

leaders criticized their lack of involvement in the foreign policy of the Realm behind closed doors. If so, this would not be evident in the social media accounts.

However, if we assume that the social media accounts, which we study, represent the actual level of Greenlandic actions, then why do we not witness any Greenlandic attempts to increase the Greenlandic competences? One reason could be that the situation is not securitized, but our analysis indicates that it is, although probably more by the Danish than the Greenlandic government leaders. Another answer could be that Greenlandic actors are influenced by the Danish securitization and do not wish to complicate what they perceive as a dangerous situation. Hence, the securitization of the Danish government is so successful that it incapacitates the Greenlandic government, which could in fact also be the goal of the Danish government. However, yet another reason for the seemingly Greenlandic acceptance of its onstage diplomatic exclusion could be that the Greenlandic government feels included in the Danish government's actions. The posts of Danish government leaders often stress the opinion of the Greenlandic government, thus providing the impression of Greenlandic participation and inclusion. Most notably, this is done by testimonies that they have been in contact with their Greenlandic colleagues. For example, after having had a telephone meeting with the newly elected American president on January 15, 2025, the Danish prime minister writes that she referred the words of the Greenlandic prime minister in the conversation "regarding Greenland, I referred to the statements made by the Premier Minister of Greenland, well Múte B. Egede, that Greenland is not for sale,"¹²⁰ thus somewhat constructing the Greenlandic prime minister's presence at the meeting, where he was not present. The same sentence is used in the official press release of the Danish Prime Minister's Department, which describes the telephone conversation and which is also posted on social media. Finally, an important aspect of 'feeling heard' by the Danish government could be a post of the Danish prime minister, where she states that it is Greenland that decides if the country should become independent of Denmark, the day after this statement is posted by her Greenlandic colleague:

Then there is the question of Greenlandic independence. I fully understand that this is a widely held aspiration in Greenland. And I would therefore like to reiterate that this is a decision which begins and ends in Nuuk. Greenland belongs to the Greenlandic people, and as Múte B. Egede has stated, it is the Greenlanders themselves who must define their own future. At no point will Denmark stand in the way of that process.¹²¹

In the following period, this post is followed by several posts in which the Danish prime minister states that it is Greenland that decides if it wants to become independent of Denmark.

As mentioned above, according to the Act on Self-Government, the Danish Parliament needs to approve Greenland's wish to become independent of Denmark before this comes into effect. Hence, in stating that the decision to become independent is only a Greenlandic decision—and that Denmark will never work against the Greenlandic wish to become independent—the prime minister makes a political promise, which she is formally not capable of. However, this statement may have generated a general goodwill towards Denmark in Greenland. Yet, the prime minister's statement of this is heavily criticized by parts of the Danish opposition (i.e., the formal audience), and she later defends her statement as a strategic one that was made to create goodwill in Greenland. This testifies to the circumstance that Danish government leaders thought strategically about their online communication and its impact in Greenland.

120. Mette Frederiksen (@mettefrederikson.dk), "regarding Greenland, I referred to the statements made by the Premier Minister of Greenland, well Múte B. Egede, that Greenland is not for sale," *Facebook*, January 15, 2025.

121. Mette Frederiksen (@mettefrederikson.dk), "Then there is the question of Greenlandic independence. I fully understand that this is a widely held aspiration in Greenland. And I would therefore like to reiterate that this is a decision which begins and ends in Nuuk. Greenland belongs to the Greenlandic people, and as Múte B. Egede has stated, it is the Greenlanders themselves who must define their own future. At no point will Denmark stand in the way of that process," *Facebook*, January 8, 2025.

5.2 New Knowledge and Theoretical Contribution

Our analyses of the case of the American president's claims on Greenland provide new knowledge on the order and history of the Danish realm, its political development, Danish-American relations, and the behavior of government actors in the Danish realm during a diplomatic extreme that recently spurred global attention and could potentially gain new life.

Though the results of our third analysis on Greenland's potential expansion of its competences did not correspond to our expectations, we believe that our theoretical framework holds several important contributions to the study of extremes and constitutionalism. In this regard, it is important to stress that though our legal and empirical analyses focus on the specific circumstances of the Danish realm, our theoretical framework could readily be used by scholars who aim to explore the occurrence and implications of possible diplomatic extremes in other contexts. For such important endeavors, our approach contributes in three ways:

First, we set forth a two-fold analytical framework which separates the characteristics of an extreme (its essence) from its possible political consequences (its political construction). As this framework stress, though a diplomatic extreme may itself pose a threat to constitutionalism, scholars should be aware that it may particularly do so if it is successfully constructed as dangerous—as posing a threat to an important object, i.e., securitized. Hence, to become a threat here and now, an extreme event needs an actor who constructs it as such. Accordingly, the theoretical distinction, which we make between the essence of a phenomenon and its potential construction, is politically important. Secondly, we define a specific type of extreme, a diplomatic extreme, and show how one may first assess the character of such an extreme and, thereafter, study its potential securitization by political actors. Third, though our actual empirical analysis does only apply secondary data, we illustrate how scholars may use data on citizens' emotions to assess the degree to which such securitization can be deemed successful.

6 Conclusion

In the first part of the article, we analyzed Danish and Greenlandic competences in foreign affairs within the realm. We concluded that, although Denmark formally holds the overall competences in foreign affairs, political science scholarship has shown how the size of the practical room of Greenlandic maneuver in this area has increased during the past decades. Hereafter, we turned to the question of whether a diplomatic extreme arose from December 2024 to January 2025. Our legal analysis demonstrated that, indeed, the content of the American president's claims on social media could be characterized as a diplomatic extreme. In turn, our analysis of the claims made by Danish and Greenlandic government actors and the Danish and Greenlandic citizens' emotions illustrates that Danish—but also Greenlandic—government actors successfully securitized the situation that unfolded. This could open up a window for extraordinary political means, such as Greenlandic attempts to increase Greenlandic competences in foreign affairs. Yet, our analysis in the final part of the article showed that the supposed window of opportunity was not used by Greenlandic government actors to try to enlarge the Greenlandic room for maneuvering.

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