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Banging on the Table: Strategic Communication and the Discursive Construction of Greenlandic Sovereignty

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Abstract

Within the field of Strategic Communication, geopolitical rivalries are increasingly understood as struggles for narratives and discursive dominance. This thesis explores a critical juncture in this landscape: the period between late 2025 and early 2026, marked by US President Donald Trump's renewed push to acquire Greenland, stating the US would take it "one way or another". The study examines how Greenlandic political actors engage in discourse to negotiate and construct sovereignty and national identity in response to these asymmetrical US-Danish security and acquisition narratives. Specifically, it investigates how communication is operationalized as a primary, non-material resource for exercising power and resistance under structural constraints. Adopting a qualitative approach, the study analyzes media text from this escalation using Fairclough's Critical Discourse analysis. The analytical framework is further developed through Critical Public Relations perspective, utilizing the concept of strategic framing to investigate how different political actors manage meaning, establish legitimacy, and contest interpretive dominance.

The findings reveal that the US operates as the primary agenda-setter leveraging its asymmetrical power to dictate the geopolitical discourse through aggressive transactional and paternalistic lenses, using real estate and humanitarian narratives like "the hospital ship". In response to this externally imposed agenda, Greenlandic actors actively try to resist by re-framing the discourse around self-determination, dignity, and the strategic proclamation "we are not for sale". Meanwhile, Danish communicative strategies focus on crisis management, attempting to de-escalate and stabilize the status quo within the Realm. The thesis concludes that strategic communication constitutes a vital site of ideological struggle, demonstrating how non-sovereign actors can strategically shift discursive boundaries to challenge dominant, agenda-setting power structures.

Keywords: Strategic Communication, Critical Public Relations (CPR), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Greenland, Sovereignty, Strategic framing, Identity, Organizational Communication

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1. Introduction

This study examines the strategic communication of national identity and sovereignty by Greenlandic political actors within the context of intensifying geopolitical security discourses involving the United States, and Denmark. The phenomenon under investigation concerns how political agency is discursively constructed and negotiated through communication, rather than treated as fixed or given (Fairclough, 2010). The phenomenon explored in this study is therefore not communication as such, but the discursive and strategic construction of sovereignty and identity within a specific geopolitical context, one in which Greenland must assert its right to self-determination against two external powers with competing but intersecting interests in defining its political future.

Drawing on a critical public relations perspective, the study assumes that communication is never neutral but always carries strategic intent, functioning as a tool of power through which actors shape, maintain, and challenge discourses. Communication is thus understood as embedded in social and political hierarchies where legitimacy, influence, and relationships are continuously negotiated. Both dominant and marginalized actors use strategic communication to either sustain or contest power structures, for an actor like Greenland which lacks the military and economic resources that is available to the United States and Denmark, communication composes the primary resource in which sovereignty is constructed and defended. Historical and contemporary perspectives further demonstrate how both dominant and marginalized actors use strategic communication to sustain or contest power structures.

Critical discourse analysis provides the methodological framework in which these dynamics are examined, and enables an analysis of how Greenlandic political actors discursively negotiate national identity and sovereignty in ways that seek to assert agency, claim legitimacy, and reposition Greenland as a self-determining political subject within a shifting geopolitical landscape. This study contributes to the field of strategic communication by demonstrating how a structurally constrained political actor uses communication as a deliberate tool to construct legitimacy, negotiating their sovereignty, and resisting the agenda-setting power of dominant external actors.

1.2 Problematization

The geopolitical crisis of Greenland exposes a fierce discursive battle where three major actors- The United States, Denmark, and Greenland simultaneously deploy strategic public relations to determine who has the legitimate right to dictate Greenland's political existence. This creates a highly asymmetric and curative environment where the territory's future is actively negotiated through competing narratives of sovereignty, ownership, and postcolonial responsibility. The core problem lies in the violent communicative friction between these three agendas. The U.S. utilizes an aggressive transactional discourse that treats Greenland as a strategic asset to be acquired, bypassing international norms and democratic consent. Denmark, while officially championing Greenlandic autonomy, actively retreats into a paternalistic security discourse that moves critical decisions behind closed doors, thereby reasserting its colonial-era authority over Arctic defense.

This multi-layered pressure traps Greenland in a profound political paradox. Historically, Greenland's political foundation has been the practice of democratic pursuit of full independence from Denmark. Yet, caught in the limbo of American transnational coercion and Danish paternalism, Greenlandic actors are forced into a gridlock where they must use their public voice defensively. To prevent being consumed by American hegemony. Greenland must strategically use its communication to put its own statehood "on pause" and cling to the Danish Realm for protection. The core problem is this structural deadlock: in this struggle between USA, Denmark, and Greenland over who decides Greenland's fate, the only way for Greenland to defend its long-term autonomy is by discursively reinforcing its immediate subordination to its former colonizer.

1.3 Empirical background

For centuries, Greenland's international identity was defined by its colonial ties to the Danish Kingdom and its strategic utility to the United States. Following a 1941 defense agreement, Greenland operated largely as a passive object of great power politics. While the 2009 Self-Government Act formally recognized the Greenlandic people's right to self-determination (Ackrén, 2025), the territory remains constitutionally bound to Denmark under the Realm (*Rigsfællesskabet*), with Copenhagen retaining control over foreign policy and defense. This dual reality leaves Greenland vulnerable to external, and neo-colonial perceptions by framing it as an asset to be acquired or protected. The vulnerability has

researched a critical juncture in 2026. As observed by Ian Manners (2026), the global landscape has shifted toward realism, explained by the re-election of Trump and aggressive U.S. foreign interventions. Within this multipolar power struggle, Greenland's ability to protect their agency through its Ministry of Statehood and Foreign Affairs serves as a primary tool of resistance (Ackrén, 2025).

Greenland is the world's largest island, sustained by a population of approximately 56.000 citizens (Ackrén, 2025). Following centuries of Danish colonial administration (1721-1953), a domestic urge for autonomy was catalyzed in 1972 when Greenland was forced into the European Economic Community despite a 70% local majority voted against the entry. This resistance eventually culminated in the 2009 Self-Government Act, which established a robust institutional framework via the *Natsisartut* (Parliament) and the *Naalakkersuisut* (Government) (Ackrén, 2025). Crucially, while the act grants Greenland the legal mandate to pursue full independence, its contemporary geopolitical actions must still be negotiated within the sovereign framework of the Danish Realm.

To comprehend Greenland's contemporary vulnerability, its trajectory must be analysed through a critical postcolonial lens. Greenland's integration into the global security apparatus began during the Second World War, when a 1941 agreement placed the island under U.S. protection, effectively regulating security policy (Ackrén, 2025) and allowing Washington to establish extensive military control, including Thule Air Base (now Pituffik Space Base), without local consultation (Høegh, 2024). In 1953, Denmark integrated Greenland as a county (in Danish, *amt*) without a referendum to satisfy UN decolonization mandates. However, historical scholarship suggests this transition actually produced what Hermann (2021) conceptualizes as a "camouflaged colony," initiating an intensive period of structural colonization. (Hermann, 2021). Guided by the Greenland Commission of 1950 (G-50), Danish administrative policies prioritized national and economic prestige (Sørensen, 2007). Denmark implemented aggressive "Danization" policies that marginalized the Greenlandic language and forced the relocation of local settlements into industrialized fishing towns, causing widespread social alienation and the erosion of traditional Inuit identity (Hermann, 2021). As founding member of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) in 1977, Greenland signaled it was not merely a remnant of European imperialism (Høegh, 2024), explaining the deeply rooted domestic drive to transition from a reactive colonial fragment into a proactive, self-determining nation.

The historic precedent of treating Greenland as an external security asset directly shapes contemporary American foreign policy. In a discursive escalation at the 2026 World

Economic Forum in Davos, Trump (2026) asserted that the U.S. “gave Greenland back” to Denmark after the Second World War, leveraging this selective reading of history to imply a latent American property claim to the island (Halberg, 2026). This narrative misrepresents the legal reality of Greenlandic sovereignty. While the 1941 agreement granted temporary military rights, it explicitly recognized Danish sovereignty, a reality reaffirmed by a 1951 defense agreement within NATO, which nevertheless resulted in the forced, unjust relocation of the local Inuit population to expand Thule Air Base (Halberg, 2026). Through subsequent autonomy reforms, Greenlanders achieved international recognition as a distinct people. Consequently, contemporary geopolitical dynamics necessitate the direct inclusion of Greenlandic representatives in bilateral decisions, clashing directly with anachronistic imperial discourses of transaction and ownership (Halberg, 2026).

1.4 Research aim and research question

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how Greenlandic political actors communicate and negotiate sovereignty and national identity within the shifting geopolitical context of intensifying US-Danish security relations. By examining how Greenlandic political actors discursively respond to competing external constructions of their political status, whether as a territory to be acquired, a partner to protect, or a people with the right to self-determination, the study seeks to understand how sovereignty is communicatively constructed by a structurally constrained actor operating within asymmetrical power relations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of strategic communication by examining how political actors use communication as a deliberate tool to construct legitimacy, negotiate sovereignty, and assert agency within geopolitical power structures where formal institutional power is unequally distributed.

RQ: How do Greenlandic political actors discursively negotiate national identity and sovereignty in response to intensifying U.S. and Danish security discourses?

1.5 Scope and Relevancy

As the 2026 geopolitical climate shifts toward what can be seen as an aggressive imperialistic tone, where superpowers view Greenland as a territory to be seized rather than a partner to be consulted. Manners writes (2025), what Greenland, and the world, is experiencing is a part of an emerging multipolar world. This thesis explores the evolution of Greenlandic political agency through the lens of strategic communication. Initially, our

research focused on the complex, post-colonial communicative relationship between Greenland and Denmark. However, this dynamic has been fundamentally disrupted by the intensified interest of the U.S. in the Arctic region. This shift has added a new layer of complexity to the relations in the region: while the US presence introduces a third “great power” actor, it simultaneously appears to be shifting the communicative link between Greenland and Denmark, potentially even drawing them closer together in certain strategic areas. We therefore wish to investigate this communicative “link” in order to understand how Greenland strategically navigates its quest for autonomy while simultaneously balancing the competing interests and security dependencies of two major powers.

This research gains its urgency from the premise that communication permeates every aspect of political authority. Therefore, analyzing who is permitted to speak, and who is spoken for, reveals the underlying power structures of the Danish Kingdom. By utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis to examine official statements from relevant actors within the trilateral discourse. In order to understand the current shifts in the North Atlantic, this thesis adopts a definition of strategic communication as the use of symbolic and informational means by states and political actors to achieve significant objectives. As Ritter (2025) argues, strategic communication should be viewed as a fundamental instrument of national power, functioning along the economic, military, and diplomatic counterparts. This perspective is highly relevant to the Greenlandic context, as it highlights how informational statecraft can be utilized by non-sovereign actors to shape preferences and build legitimacy. By situating Greenland’s communication within this perspective, we can analyze the current geopolitical developments and the Greenlandic quest for agency, not merely as a local political struggle, rather as an exercise in “winning hearts and minds” (Ritter, 2025) within a globalized information age.

Furthermore, a compelling quote regarding the relevancy of the underlying power structures within the Danish Kingdom comes from Danish diplomat Kenneth Høegh: “What happens in the Arctic today, affects the rest of the world tomorrow.” (2024).

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction and motivation of topic

This chapter situates the Greenlandic case within a broader scholarly discussion on strategic communication, geopolitical discourse and communication, sovereignty, and political agency within the Arctic region. It reviews existing literature on Greenland's historical and political development, with particular focus on colonial continuities, self-governance, as well as evolving international visibility. Together, the literature reveal a gap that this theses addresses: while existing scholarship has examined Greenlandic postcolonial identity, strategic communication in international relations, and media representations of different others separately, no study has brought these perspectives into dialogue in order to examine how Greenlandic political actors communicate sovereignty under the conditions of a geopolitical crisis.

2.1.1 Contextual background

The question of how a small and structurally constrained political actor communicates sovereignty against more powerful states is not a new one, but it has rarely been as visible or urgent as it became in late 2025 and early 2026, when the President of the United States publicly and repeatedly demanded the acquisition of Greenland. The communicative responses from the political actors (deliberate, strategic, across parliamentary declarations, social media, and international diplomacy) became the departure point of this study. The relationship between Greenland, Denmark, and the U.S. has historically been examined through international law, post-colonial studies, and Arctic geopolitics, but the strategic communication dimension of this relationship remains underexplored. This thesis takes that gap as its point of departure, motivated by the conviction that understanding how politically marginalized actors communicate sovereignty under conditions of external pressure is both analytically significant and practically relevant to the field of strategic communication.

2.2 A systematic approach to literature research

Fink (2005) defines a literature review as a systematic and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing existing scholarly literature; this study has adopted a structured approach in order to ensure transparency and reduce selection bias. The search was

conducted across Finn (Lund University library search engine), Google Scholar, SageJournals, and EBSCOhost. Keyword combinations such as “Greenlandic sovereignty”, “Arctic geopolitics”, “geopolitics strategic communication”, “postcolonial identity Greenland”, “critical discourse analysis political communication”, and “critical public relations legitimacy” were used. Peer-reviewed articles, edited volumes, and book chapters published in English or Danish were included where they addressed the keyword combinations or strategic communication in geopolitical contexts, postcolonial identity, agency in the Arctic, or media representations of distant and marginalized others. Titles and abstracts were scanned and assessed for relevance, and studies grounded in methodological transparency and theoretically grounded were prioritized. Foundational theoretical works, including Fairclough on critical discourse analysis, L’Etang et al. on critical public relations, Gad on Greenlandic post-colonial identity, and Falkheimer and Heide on strategic communication, served as core text, whereas more recent empirical studies on Arctic geopolitics and Greenlandic agency were treated as supplementary. This process clarified both where scholarship on Greenlandic strategic communication is established and where the gap this thesis addresses remains.

2.2.1 Strategic Communication, Politics and International Relations

Strategic communication is a broad and evolving field, characterized by its integration of previously distinct disciplines and its focus on communication as a purposeful and goal-oriented practice. Falkheimer and Heide (2018) highlight that communication can be analyzed at four levels: individual, group, organizational, and societal. The organizational and societal levels are particularly significant for understanding how communication practices construct legitimacy, shape identity, and reflect broader cultural and political norms. A central conceptual development within the field has been the shift from a transmission view (i.e. where communication is understood as the linear distribution of information from sender to receiver) toward a constitutive view (i.e. communication actively constructs organizational and social reality) (Falkheimer & Heide, 2023). This shift has moved the analytical focus from message content and distribution toward the discursive processes through which meaning, identity, and legitimacy is produced. The perspective is directly relevant for examining how politically marginalized actors assert sovereignty through communications, since it directs attention toward the conditions under which certain communicative acts become recognized as legitimate and others do not. The definition most widely cited in the

field is found in Hallahan et al. (2007, p. 3): “the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission.” While this definition captures the intentional dimension of strategic communication, it was developed primarily with organizational actors in mind and does not fully account for the communicative strategies of political actors operating within power relations at the geopolitical level.

The field’s scope has been extended by scholarship situating strategic communication within the history of statecraft, demonstrating that persuasion has historically functioned as a substitute for, or supplement to, violent action (Ritter, 2025). Importantly, this body of work shows that weaker actors have historically used the expansion of media to disrupt dominant colonial narratives, a dynamic that is directly relevant for cases where communication function as the primary resource available for asserting sovereignty against more powerful actors (Blaagaard et al., 2024; Ritter, 2025). History itself functions as a rhetorical resource in strategic narratives, by appealing to collective memories and historical experiences, actors can align their messages with shared social realities. Ritter (2025) draws on Plato’s “natural joints” statement: that embodies solidarity, divisions, and historical experiences that shape how communities understand themselves. This insight is particularly relevant for cases where colonial legacies function as active communicative resources rather than mere background context, circumstances that the present study examines in relation to the trilateral dynamic between Greenland, Denmark, and the U.S.

Within the sphere of international relations, strategic communication is best understood as the constant negotiation of ends, which can best be understood as a theatre of debate in which the primary goal is to synchronize deeds, words, and images to establish political legitimacy (Frost & Michelsen, 2017). Similarly, within diplomatic communication, constructive ambiguity has been identified as a strategic tool: the crafting of messages that carry different meanings for different audiences, allowing senders to maintain plausible deniability while ensuring the intended message reaches its target (Jönsson & Hall, 2003)..

A significant challenge identified in this literature is the tendency for political actors to focus on short-term tactical messaging at the expense of coherent long-term narratives, which risk lasting reputational damage (*ibid.*). This tension between tactical and strategic communication is directly relevant to examine how actors in asymmetrical power relations must balance immediate communicative responses to crisis within the long-term construction of credible political identity.

However, what this body of literature has not yet examined is how a non-sovereign actor with limited institutional power, such as Greenland, navigates this strategic struggle

where the ends, ways, and means available to it are structurally constrained by its dependence on the very partner whose narratives it must align with and contest. This is the gap the present study addresses.

2.2.2 Postcolonial Identity and Political Agency in Greenland

Scholars of Greenlandic postcolonial identity consistently emphasize the discursive dimension of sovereignty negotiations (Gad, 2009; 2017; Høegh, 2024), though they differ in the degree to which they foreground the role of strategic communication as distinct from political agency more broadly. Where Gad focuses on the construction of identity through colonial othering, Høegh attends more to the institutional and diplomatic mechanism through which Greenlandic agency is exercised. This study brings these two perspectives into dialogue with the strategic communication literature, arguing that the discursive construction of sovereignty cannot be fully understood without examining the communicative strategies through which it is produced.

Research on Greenlandic post-colonial identity had largely been situated within literature studies and anthropology, with less attention to its political dimensions. Ulrik Pram Gad (2009) contributes to this field by analyzing Greenlandic identity as a political and discursive construction shaped by ongoing negotiations with Denmark as a colonial “Other”. Although Greenland has moved from colonial rule to Home Rule and Self-Government, Denmark remains a central reference point in identity discourse. Gad argues that dominant identity projects in Greenland are structured around essentialist conceptions where “Greenlandic” and “Danish” are constructed as mutually exclusive categories. Greenlandic identity is typically grounded in traditional Inuit culture and, particularly, the Greenlandic language. This essentialism has historically functioned as a strategic tool in the decolonization process. Greenlandic identity combines traditional Inuit culture with modern institutions inherited from Danish colonialism, creating tensions: Denmark is symbolically rejected, yet Danish remains central in education and administration. What Gad’s analysis establishes is that Greenlandic identity is not a fixed cultural given, but a strategic discursive construction that must be continuously produced and defended through communicative choices. This insight is foundational for the present study’s examination of how that construction operates under conditions of acute external pressure.

Gad and Adler-Nissen (2014) further complicate the picture by challenging the myth of the Nordic region as inherently benevolent and harmonious. They argue that the experiences of former Nordic colonies, including Greenland, reveal enduring imperial

legacies that theories of European integration have largely overlooked. This postimperial perspective is directly relevant in order to understand the Danish-Greenlandic relationship as one shaped by colonial history rather than voluntary partnership. Gad (2017) deepens the analysis by theorizing Greenlandic domestic politics as postcolonial sovereignty games, a framework in which political, linguistic, and practical strategies are deployed to balance the preservation of indigenous cultural identity, the achievement of legal self-government, and the pursuit of economic self-sufficiency. Crucially, Gad argues that Greenlandic national identity is defined not by a fixed cultural essence but by traditional discourse, a movement away from colonial subordination toward future sovereignty as a dynamic and communicatively produced condition, rather than a static legal status. This provides the study with a framework for understanding sovereignty as a dynamic communicative condition rather than a fixed legal status.

Ackrén and Jakobsen (2015) explains in their article that the 2009 Self-Government Act grants Greenland full authority over its natural resources, while Denmark retains control over defence, foreign policy, and sovereignty. This division creates potential tensions according to the authors, because of the fact that the natural resource policy is closely intertwined with foreign and security matters, requiring ongoing cooperation between the two governments. However, the structure of the Act assumes that policy areas can be separated, a premise challenged by developments such as international mining agreements and the prospect of uranium production. Politically, Greenland has expressed ambitions to expand its authority in foreign relations and gradually assume greater legislative control, including over foreign labour and extractive industries. These efforts reflect a broader trajectory toward increased autonomy and possible independence. Besides that, Ackrén and Jakobsen explain that an independent Greenland would face significant challenges in managing foreign and security policy, particularly given the absence of its own military. Future alliances, whether with the U.S., within a Nordic framework, or through other partnerships, will therefore, according to the article, be crucial in shaping Greenland's role in evolving Arctic geopolitics (Ackrén and Jakobsen, 2015). This structural tension between formal autonomy and substantive dependence is the institutional context, which the communicative strategies that are being examined in this study, operate.

Greenland's relationship with the EU is also something that has been characterized by a tension between practical dependence on Denmark and the pursuit of a distinct, post-Danish national identity. According to Gad (2014) Greenland relies on Danish diplomacy as a platform for EU relations, it simultaneously presents itself as if it were already sovereign,

often minimizing Denmark's role in both rhetoric and praxis. Gad argues that this arrangement befits both parties: Greenland strengthens its international position, while Denmark distances itself from colonial associations. However, contradictions remain. Greenland's growing independence narrative may clash with its continued reliance on Denmark, and political rhetoric about sovereign equality could create risks in both domestic and EU contexts. Nevertheless, these strategies may help foster civic engagement, attract investment, and gradually move Greenland closer to formal sovereignty. Overall, Gad (2014) argues that Greenland demonstrates how a non-sovereign policy can expand its agency internationally without direct confrontation with its former colonial power. This demonstrates that sovereignty is not only a legal condition but a communicative performance, a finding that the present study extends by examining how that performance is conducted within the specific crisis context of 2026.

2.2.3 Greenlandic Politics Today

Recent scholarship situates the emerging geopolitical conflict over Greenland within broader discussions on shifting global power relations and the erosion of the liberal international order. Ian Manners article (2026) examines how renewed U.S. claims over Greenland expose deep fractures in transatlantic relations and challenge Europe's ability to respond coherently to unilateral power politics. Manners conceptualises the Greenland case through four analytical perspectives: realism, elite power structures, the decline of the liberal international order, and planetary politics. The key argument of his article is that Greenland should not be understood as a strategic asset, but as a lived ecological space, where sustainability and Greenlandic agency must shape political responses (Manners, 2026). This is directly relevant to this study's examination of how that agency is communicatively constructed and asserted in the face of precisely that kind of realist and transactional power politics Manners identifies.

Furthermore, scholarship also highlights that crises function as a carrier for the further normalization of anti-democratic positions, extreme claims do not need to be accepted in order to be normalized, they only need to become the reference point around which others orient themselves (Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2022). The phrasing provided by regarding normalization functions as an analytical vocabulary, which enables the examination of discourse surrounding acquisition of Greenland as a legitimate political goal, not only as a geopolitical provocation but as a discursive shift.

Høegh (2024) provides a foundational account of Greenland's evolution as an international actor, tracing its transition from a strategic object of the Danish Crown to an emerging nation that actively manages its own foreign relations. This transition is not merely institutional but discursive: Greenland has moved from being defined by external actors to increasingly asserting the right to define itself. A pivotal moment in this trajectory, according to Høegh, was the 1985 withdrawal from the European Communities, a landmark exercise of Greenlandic agency in direct opposition to Danish and European administrative structures, demonstrating that Greenlandic communicative resistance to external imposition has historical precedent. Most significant for the present study is Høegh's identification of the power of definition as the central stake of Arctic politics: the insistence, captured in the principle of "nothing about us without us," that Greenlandic actors must be the primary decision makers about their own territory and future. Taken together, Manners (2026) and Høegh (2024) establish that the current geopolitical crisis is a critical juncture for Greenlandic agency. However, neither study examines the specific communicative strategies employed by Greenlandic political actors in response to the crisis in media discourse, a question that this study addresses through critical discourse analysis and Critical public relations analysis of the empirical material stretching from January to March 2026.

2.3.2 Journalism, National Identity, and the Colonial "Other"

Building on the scholarship establishing how Greenlandic actors communicate sovereignty, the following sections examine the media contexts where the communication circulates and the representational structures that determine whether Greenlandic voices are constructed as sovereign subjects or distant, passive others. Research on journalism and post-colonial theory highlights how media not only structure ethical relations to distant others but also produce boundaries between "us" and "them". Since the professionalization of journalism in the late nineteenth century, its social role has been tied to the construction of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 2016) and the production of a unified public "we" (Muhlmann, 2008). Postcolonial scholars argue that this unified "we" had historically been structured around Western, and often white, subjectivity. As Gonzales and Torres (2011) demonstrate in the U.S. context, journalistic professionalization coincided with the systematic reproduction of racial stereotypes and the normalization of a white narrative. Journalism thus not only consolidates a collective national identity but simultaneously constructs an external "them", delineating the boundaries of belonging. In this way Western knowledge production

claims a universal standpoint while positioning Western subjects as normative and others as deviant or inferior. From this perspective, journalistic discourse plays a central role in reproducing coloniality, in other words the persistence of hierarchical power relations beyond formal colonialism (Quijano, 2007). The selection of sources, voices and perspectives become crucial to how power is maintained in news discourse (Franklin & Carlson, 2010). Together, these perspectives establish that the sourcing and framing choices of news media are not neutral journalistic practices but mechanism through which colonial power relations are reproduced and normalized (Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2022), a finding that the intertextuality and sourcing analysis in this study's meso-level aim to examine.

2.3.3 Mediated Othering: Constructing and Challenging the “Us and Them” Narrative

When it comes to Greenland, Blaagaard, Adrian and Nordsted (2024) lift a contemporary example of journalism's role in renegotiating colonial histories in the Danish public broadcaster DR's podcast *Spiralkampangnen*, which revisit the Danish state's coercive IUD campaign targeting Greenlandic women. The podcast centers Greenlandic-Inuit women's testimonies about involuntary contraceptive insertions, while also incorporating archival material and interviews with medical professionals involved at the time. The state's coercive IUD campaign has been analyzed as an example of how journalism can re-center voices historically positioned as the “Other” within Danish national narratives. By foregrounding Greenlandic-Inuit testimonies and critically interrogating Denmark's colonial governance, the podcast reflects the influence of feminist and postcolonial critique on contemporary journalism practice. At the same time, Blaagaard, Adrian and Nordsted note that such corrective journalism continues to operate within professional norms that construct a unified national audience. Even when challenging colonial injustice, journalism reproduces a collective “we” in relation to “the Other”, thereby sustaining the discourse boundaries through which national identity and belonging are negotiated. This suggests that while representation of “the Other” may shift, the structural dynamics of mediated inclusion and exclusion remain central to modern journalism (Blaagaard, Adrian and Nordsted, 2024) .

This strategic use of communication to maintain power is not limited to narratives, but extends to the very structure of language itself. For the Greenland study, this highlights how media and scholarly representations can construct and naturalize hierarchies, shape

perceptions of political agency, and underscores the relevance of postcolonial discourse theory for analysing greenlands positioning in international discourse.

Building on the discussion of othering and mediated power, recent scholarship within communication and postcolonial studies has critically examined the role of indigenous culture communication in global governance and development processes. The article argues that Indigenous communication has become central to global governance and sustainable development, particularly in postcolonial contexts. Although dialogue is often portrayed as emancipatory, scholars such as Dutta & Elers (2020) warn that it can function as a tool for maintaining power structures within transnational capitalism. An important distinction is made between cultural sensitivity, where organizations adapt to cultural expressions in order to achieve their own goals, and a culture centred approach, in which marginalized groups are enabled to build their own communicative infrastructures and challenge structural inequalities. Sovereignty is reconceptualized not merely as territorial control, but as something constituted through communication, identity formation and struggles over who defines the terms of political participation (Dutta & Elers, 2020).

Taken together, these studies illustrate that both historical and contemporary forms of mediated communication participate in the construction of “the Other”. For the Greenland case, this underscores how media and scholarly representations can naturalize hierarchies, shape perceptions of political agency, and reinforce asymmetric power relations. Communication has historically been both a tool for domination and a site for resistance. It reinforces the relevance of examining how the “Other” is represented, how hierarchies are naturalized and how marginalized voices can be centred in both historical and contemporary mediated context, including in the international discourse surrounding Greenland.

The insights gathered by scholarship on mediated othering connects directly to the Critical PR tradition which examines how communication functions as a tool of power in the construction and contestation of political legitimacy. Munshi and Kurian (2016), identify a fundamental hierarchy of publics within mainstream public relations discourse, ranging from dominant elite publics that are represented to many that are not represented at all. This hierarchy, they argue, is not incidental but structural: it reflects the unequal distribution of communicative resources that determines whose voices shape the public discourse and whose voices are systematically marginalized. This parallel with the media representation literature identifies the same mechanism operating across different traditions. While postcolonial media scholars examine how moral distance is constructed through journalistic representation, and postcolonial scholars demonstrate how journalistic sourcing reproduces colonial hierarchies,

the Critical PR tradition takes the analysis a step further by asking *who* benefits from these constructions and *whose* strategic interests they serve. For this study, this convergence is of analytical significance: it suggests that the absence of Greenlandic voices in Western media is not only a representational problem, but a strategic one. This is a condition that both reflects and reinforces the power asymmetries within which Greenlandic actors must communicate sovereignty.

2.4 Definitions

2.4.1 Colony

Colony is “a country or area controlled politically by a more powerful country that is often faraway” (Cambridge, 2026). As mentioned before Greenland is formally self-governed and all matters other than foreign policies and defence is ruled by the regional parliament of Greenland. However Greenland can be justified as a colony because of the long period of period it was politically and legally subordinated by Denmark. Until 1953, it was formally a Danish colony territory. Even after this point, Greenland continued to be politically governed by Denmark, without full control over key areas such as foreign policies and defense. Despite the introduction of self-government, Denmark has retained authority over these central domains, demonstrating a present asymmetry in the power relationship. From a post-colony perspective, this can therefore be seen as a continuing legacy of colonial domination (Ackrén, 2025).

However, Greenland is today not formally a colony, but a self-governing territory within the Kingdom of Denmark (Rigsfællesskabet) with extensive autonomy. It was a Danish colony until 1953, when its status was changed to a Danish county (amt), and later became a self-governing territory with its own parliament (Hjemmestyre 1979, Selvstyre 2009).

2.4.2 Sovereignty

Sovereignty is defined as the power of a country to control its own government and the authority to rule (Cambridge Dictionary, 2026). In its legal-political sense, it refers to the formal recognition of a state’s supreme authority within a given territory, conferred through international laws and frameworks. The 2009 Self-Government Act establishes this formal dimension for Greenland, which grants extensive legislative authority and recognizes the

Greenlandic people as a distinct people under international law with the right to self-determination.

However, this conventional definition is insufficient as the sole working definition for this thesis. It treats sovereignty as a binary condition, something that is possessed or not, whereas the Greenlandic case demonstrates that sovereignty exists along a spectrum, negotiated between formal legal status and substantive political agency. Fundamentally, it treats sovereignty as a status granted from the outside rather than something produced and sustained through the communicative efforts of actors who claim it. The thesis therefore adopts a broader working definition: sovereignty is understood as a communicatively constructed and continuously negotiated form of legitimacy (i.e. the recognized right of a people to act as self-determining political subjects). This means sovereignty is not fixed but dynamic, not only a legal status but a subject position, and only recognized to the extent that is regarded as legitimate by the relevant audiences whose recognition confers the political authority that formal legal status alone cannot guarantee (Beetham, cited in Fairclough, 2010).

2.4.3 Agency

Agency is defined as the capacity of an actor, individual or collective, to act independently, make intentional choices, and influence their own situation and environment. It represents the ability to initiate purposeful action rather than merely responding to external forces. The Cambridge Dictionary (2026) captures this relation dimension through the formulation “through the agency of someone or something”; agency is not simply a property an actor possess but something exercised in relation to a specific context, set of constraints, and audience. In this conventional sense, agency presupposes a degree of freedom: the actor must have enough autonomy to choose between alternatives and to act on those choices. This understanding is complicated, however, when applied to political actors operating under conditions of structural constraint: such as a semi-autonomous territory whose foreign and defence policy is controlled by another state and whose communicative resources are vastly outweighed by those of the actors it must negotiate with. In such conditions, the conventional definition of agency as free and independent action does not adequately capture the reality of what political actors do: they do not act freely, but they do act, strategically and consequentially within the constraints that structure their situation.

This thesis therefore draws on the broader understanding of agency that accommodates action under constraint. Fairclough’s (2010) understanding of social actors as

positioned within structures that both enable and limit their communicative choices, agency is understood not as the absence of structural limitation but as the transformative capacity of actors to navigate, contest, and potentially reshape the discursive conditions within which they operate. Agency is relational and negotiated: it exists in the tension between what an actor is structurally permitted to do and what they strategically choose to do within and against those permissions. Applied to the Greenlandic discourse, agency is something that Greenlandic political actors continuously construct and exercise, within the structural constraints imposed by the Danish Realm, international law and the geopolitical pressure of the U.S.

3. Theory

The following chapter presents the theoretical framework guiding the analysis of how Greenlandic political actors strategically communicate sovereignty and national identity within an intensifying geopolitical crisis. The framework is constructed around the two following interconnected theoretical perspectives: 1) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), 2) Critical Public Relations (CPR). Together, these perspectives provide the thesis with analytical vocabulary to examine not only what is being communicated in the empirical material, but how discourse constructs political reality, distributes communicative authority, and either sustains or challenges existing power structures.

3.1 CDA as a theory

In this thesis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed as both a theoretical framework and a method. Theoretically, CDA is grounded in the dialectical understanding that language and society are mutually constitutive, discourse does not merely reflect social reality, but actively constructs it (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000). This study utilizes Norman Fairclough's (2010) approach to CDA, within this approach, discourse is defined not merely as language in use (text or speech), but as a form of social practice. It is a socially conditioned way of representing, constructing, and acting upon the world. By viewing language as a form of social practice, this study explores how power relations are established, maintained, and contested. On a theoretical level, CDA examines how "dominant" groups use language to maintain their status, investigating how certain ideas or ideologies are made to seem "natural" or "common sense" through repetition in media, politics, and daily talk.

The theory holds that the way an event is discursively framed, for instance, how an action is categorized or described fundamentally changes the social reality of that event. It is through this repressive character of discourse that certain statements appear as true and significant within society, effectively shaping the boundaries of what is common sense (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000).

The alignment of discourse analysis comes from Foucault who views discourse as a tool for power. Moreover he argues that a discourse consists of systematical representations of something in text or speech and which, through its repetitive nature, causes statements to appear as true and significant within society (Foucault, 2003). Conditions of possibilities is a central term by Foucault that clarifies underlying historical and discursive structures that

enable certain ideas, statements, or forms of knowledge to emerge and be recognized as meaningful or true within a particular social and historical context (Foucault, 1984). These conditions shape what can be said, thought, and accepted as true, and they enable particular developments, perspectives, and forms of language to emerge, while at the same time limiting others. In this sense, conditions of possibility structure the frameworks through which reality is understood and communicated in a given historical moment. This also means that the conditions of possibilities shape the discursive frameworks through which people interpret cities, places, and products (Fairclough, 2001). These frameworks influence psychological processes such as perception, identity and emotional attachment, thereby affecting how places and brands are understood, valued, and experienced (Möllerström & Stenberg, 2014).

To operationalize these power dynamics, a central theoretical concern of this thesis is how the boundaries of what can be said and recognized as legitimate shift over time. This process connects Fairclough's (2010) concept of *naturalization* (Fairclough, 2010) concept of *normalization*. While the two terms are closely related and often reinforce one another, they capture distinct dimensions of ideological entrenchment. Naturalization describes how particular ideological representations become so embedded within discourses that they cease to appear ideological at all. Instead, they are experienced as “common sense”, objective, and the natural order of things (Fairclough, 1989). What begins as a politically or socially contested position gradually becomes assumed, invisible, and treated as a self-evident truth, serving a specific agenda while hiding its ideological origins. Normalization on the other hand focuses on how certain ideas, discourses, and behaviors are turned into a social norm or standard against which everything else is judged. Through reception and institutional backing, specific perspectives become "normalized" as the baseline of reality, rendering alternative viewpoints abnormal or unthinkable. Crises function as a carrier for the further normalization of anti-democratic positions, in order for extreme discourses to be normalized, they only need to become the reference point around which others orient themselves (Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2022).

Together, naturalization and normalization are reinforced by, and actively reshape the conditions of possibilities (Foucault, 1984). As certain statements are repeatedly naturalized or normalized within a discourse, the historical and discursive structures that determine what is legitimate are transformed. What was previously unthinkable becomes thinkable, and what once contested becomes taken for granted. This provides the study with the analytical vocabulary to examine not only what is being communicated in the empirical material, but

also how the very conditions under which communication issues are being contested and transformed.

Finally to address these macro-level transformations through the social practice dimension, this study applies to Fairclough's (2010) four questions as mentioned in *Manifesto for CDA in a time of crisis*. The manifesto is an organizing framework for the social practice dimension of the analysis, asking not only how discourse constructs power, but which communicative strategies are prevailing and with what consequences. Specifically, the framework directs the analysis toward four critical questions; 1) what strategies are emerging and who is promoting them, 2) which strategies are winning the strategic struggle, 3) which strategies are actually being implemented and shaping social transformation, and 4) which strategies are, or are not, likely to lead to a progressive way out of the crisis which can bring improvements in human well-being.

The analysis also draws on Fairclough's (2010) engagement with Beetham's theorisation of legitimate power. Power can be said to be legitimate to the extent that it conforms to established rules (Beetham, cited in Fairclough, 2010). These rules can be justified by reference to shared beliefs, and there is evidence of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation. This framework is analytically productive for the Greenlandic case because it allows the legitimacy claims of all three actors to be examined against the same set of conditions, revealing where those claims are strong, where they are internally contradictory, and where they depend on the suppression or erasure of Greenlandic consent. As Beetham argues: "a breach of rules leads to illegitimacy; a discrepancy between rules and beliefs or the absence of shared beliefs leads to a legitimacy deficit, and a withdrawal of consent leads to delegitimation".

Beetham identifies three conditions, 1) conformity to established rules, 2) justification by shared beliefs and, 3) consent for the subordinate. These conditions map onto the three actors in the empirical material, revealing why legitimacy is such a pivotal aspect of the discourse surrounding the geopolitical situation, as well as why discourse, rather than military or economic power, is the primary terrain on which the crisis is being contested.

3.2 Critical public relations perspective

Critical Public Relations (CPR), offers a broader understanding of public relations by moving beyond a narrow focus on corporate interests to consider the needs and aspirations of diverse publics (L'Etang et al., 2016). It challenges mechanistic and propagandistic interpretations of

public relations, instead it positions the field within wider social and political contexts. This expanded perspective is accompanied by an increasing recognition that public relations practices existed long before the term itself was formally established.

The study adopts a CPR perspective, which emphasizes that communication is never neutral and that strategic intent is always present. Communication is not viewed merely as a managerial tool, but as a practice embedded in power relations, where messages both reflect and shape social, political, and cultural hierarchies. Motion and Leitch (2016) further theorize public relations as a system of meaning production that is inextricably linked to the maintenance or transformation of power regimes. While functional approaches often privilege elite interests and the accumulation of capital under neoliberalism (Motion & Weaver, as cited in Macnamara, 2016), a CPR lens uncovers how dominant coalitions utilize perception management to manipulate public opinion in the service of corporate or government power (Howley, as cited in Macnamara, 2016). Applied to the Arctic context, CPR provides the necessary framework to analyze how actors strategically construct discourses to advance their geopolitical interests.

To further operationalize this critical lens within the geopolitical triangle of Greenland, Denmark and the US, the study incorporates postcolonial and social-constructivist perspectives on diplomacy and communication. Dutta (2016) expands the scope of CPR by critiquing public relations through a postcolonial framework, arguing that strategic communication often functions as a tool for maintaining global inequalities. From this perspective, the diplomatic rhetoric of “security” and “cooperation” utilized by superpowers can be analyzed as a way to circulate universalized knowledge claims that mask underlying imperial interests (Dutta, 2016). By focusing on the subaltern voice, Dutta highlights how marginalized actors are frequently erased from high-level decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the study draws on Dolea’s (2016) call for a shift in how we understand public diplomacy. Dolea challenges the functionalist “how-to” approach to national promotion, shifting the focus toward the “why”, the social and political consequences of how a nation is constructed through text. By adopting a social constructivist perspective, diplomacy is understood not as a neutral exchange of information, but as a struggle for symbolic power (Dolea, 2016). This struggle involves what Motion and Leitch (2016) describe as the “operationalization” of discourse, where *abstract strategic imaginaries* are translated into material arrangements and social practices through the mobilization of support. In a world shaped by neoliberal competition, Greenland is not merely “branding” itself; it is strategically utilizing its geographic location as a diplomatic currency to negotiate

autonomy. In this sense, discourse does not remain at the level of representation, but become materially consequential, shaping what forms of sovereignty and political actions are perceived as possible and legitimate. This also links to processes of normalization, where certain geopolitical roles and dependencies come to be understood as rational responses rather than contested political outcomes (Motion & Leitch, 2016).

3.3 Critical PR and CDA: A Theoretical Foundation

Critical Public Relations and CDA provide the theoretical foundation of this study, conceptualizing communication as a site of power, strategy, and influence. CPR emphasizes how political actors negotiate legitimacy, agency, and relationships through strategic communicative practices. CDA highlights how language constructs and maintains power relations, enabling an understanding of the discursive strategies used to shape perceptions of political agency.

With CDA and CPR, the study can examine not only how Greenland is represented, but also which elements are emphasized or omitted to strategically influence audiences and construct political legitimacy. Together, CPR and CDA theory provide a coherent framework for analyzing Greenlandic political communication as strategic, intentional, and discursively powerful.

The decision to combine these two perspectives is motivated by the nature of the research object itself. The communicative strategies that are being pursued by Greenlandic, Danish, and American actors are not simply expressions of pre-existing political positions, they are constitutive of those positions. As Fairclough (2010) argues, strategies have a strong discursive character: they include imaginaries for change and narratives that interpret, explain, and justify both the present condition and possible futures. Analyzing how Greenland communicates sovereignty therefore requires a framework that can move between the linguistic features of the empirical material, the social conditions under which those texts are produced and consumed, as well as the broader power structures within which all three actors operate.

CDA therefore provides the analytical foundation of the study. Drawing on Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the analysis proceeds across the textual dimension (micro level), the discursive practice dimension (meso level), and the social practice dimension (macro level). By employing this layered structure, it allows the study to move systematically from close linguistic analysis—examining how actors are being named, what

qualities are being attributed to them, and how agency is being distributed through grammar and vocabulary—toward the broader questions of which discourses are becoming dominant, which are being contested, and what social transformations they are contributing to, or resisting. Crucially, CDA as it is applied in this study is not merely descriptive. However, it is also normative (Fairclough, 2010): it addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and asks which communicative strategies are, or are not, likely to advance human well-being and offer a progressive way out of crisis. This normative dimension is particularly relevant in the Greenlandic context, where the crisis is not only geopolitical but postcolonial, a condition in which the right to speak, to be heard, and to define one's own political future remains unequally distributed.

Critical PR (L'Etang et al., 2016) extends this foundation by providing a lens specifically attuned to the strategic and relational dimensions of political communication. Where CDA asks how language constructs power, CPR asks who benefits from that construction, and whose interests are served or suppressed by particular communicative choices. Applied to the Greenlandic case, this perspective allows the analysis to examine how Greenlandic actors communicate agency under conditions of structural constraint, how Denmark deploys the rhetoric of partnership while reproducing asymmetrical power relations, and how the United States uses humanitarian framing to legitimize what fundamentally imperial ambitions. CPR also foregrounds the communicative dimension of legitimacy, the ongoing negotiation through which political actors secure or lose the right to speak authoritatively about a given situation.

Together, CDA and CPR theory form a coherent and complementary framework. CDA provides the structural architecture for the analysis, whereas CPR supplies the political and relational lens that keeps the analysis anchored in questions of power, legitimacy, and agency. CDA theory (Fairclough, 2010) names the cognitive and communicative mechanisms through which power is exercised and contested in media and political discourse. Important to comprehend, is that where these perspectives converge is in their shared insistence that language is never neutral. Every communicative choice, however seemingly technical or descriptive, participates in the construction of social reality and the distribution of political authority. It is from this premise that the analysis proceeds.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in a critical and interpretivist paradigm. It combines a CPR perspective with CDA to examine how media representations construct and negotiate geopolitical realities. By analyzing language, framing, and sourcing practices, the study explores how power relations, legitimacy, and agency are discursively produced and normalized within media text.

4.1 Research paradigm

Berger and Luckmann's, *The social construction of reality* (2011), is central to a social constructivist ontology. They argue that reality is not an objective entity that exists independently from human perception, rather it is created and maintained through social interactions. Our understanding of the world, including norms, institutions, and social roles, is socially constructed, gaining significance only through shared human practices and interpretations. Key concepts such as institutionalization and reification describe how these social constructions became stable and are perceived as real over time. This perspective is particularly relevant for qualitative research in social sciences and communication studies, as it provides a framework for analyzing how meaning and reality are relational and context-dependent (Berger and Luckmann, 2011). Aligned with this view, the epistemological position adopted in this study is interpretivist, emphasizing that knowledge is not discovered in an objective sense but is co-constructed through engagement and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This perspective recognizes that researchers and participants jointly shape understanding, and that insights are context-dependent and relational rather than universally generalizable. By adopting this paradigm, the study is able to explore communication phenomena in a way that captures subjective meanings, social context, and the multiplicity of perspectives, making it particularly suited for qualitative research in strategic communication. In line with a social constructivist and interpretivist paradigm, axiology, or the role of values in research, is considered an integral part of the research process. From this perspective, the researcher's values and assumptions, and positionality inevitably influence what is studied, how the data are interpreted, and which insights are emphasized (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Recognizing the influence of values allows the study to maintain transparency and reflectivity, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis.

This philosophical foundation underpins the study's approach to media discourse, where representations are not treated as neutral reflections of reality, but as socially constructed and strategically produced accounts that shape how geopolitical relations, actors, and power structures are understood. This view aligns with CDA, which similarly assumes that language plays a constitutive role in shaping social reality and power relations. In other words, language is viewed as a socially and politically situated practice rather than a neutral medium of communication (Falkheimer & Heide, 2023; Fairclough, 2010; L'etang et al. 2016).

*For a detailed overview of the theoretical framework, see Appendix A (Table A).

4.2 Research design

This study has a qualitative research approach centred on an instrumental case study design. The case in question, namely the geopolitical tension surrounding Greenland in 2025–2026, is selected not merely for its own sake, but as a “critical case” (Flyvbjerg, 2011), to understand the broader phenomenon of how established power relations are challenged and renegotiated in a postcolonial and neoliberal era. This phenomenon is not understood as a static object, but as a recurring, socially constructed pattern of discursive and strategic negotiation of sovereignty and national identity (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2024). By exploring this established phenomenon through the lens of strategic communication, the study examines how political agency is actively “performed” and repositioned rather than treated as a fixed attribute.

The design is emergent and reflexive, allowing for an iterative process where the empirical findings from the rhetoric arena reveals are continuously mirrored against the theoretical lenses of Critical PR. This approach is particularly suited to capturing that phenomenon as a communicative balancing act, where actors navigate power asymmetries and “double binds” between global powers. By focusing on a specific timeframe, culminating in Davos 2026 summit, the study captures a “rupture” in international relations, providing a unique window into the discursive construction of national identity and sovereignty under extreme external pressure. Consequently, the research design prioritizes depth over breadth to reveal how communication serves as a deliberate and strategic tool for actors to assert legitimacy and agency.

4.3 Data collection and Empirical Material

The empirical material of this study consists of nineteen texts published between January and March 2026, selected from news outlets representing three distinct national media contexts: namely, the United States, Denmark, and Greenland. The material was collected through purposive sampling, meaning texts were selected on the basis of their direct relevance to the research aim rather than through random or systematic sampling procedures. Specifically, the texts were included if they met three criteria: first, they engage directly with the question of Greenlandic sovereignty, autonomy or the U.S. acquisition discourse during the study period; second, that they represent a range of political actor perspectives within the trilateral geopolitical dynamic under investigation; and third, that they represent reputable, well-established news outlets with high levels of public trust within their respective national media contexts, ensuring that the selected texts reflect the dominant and widely circulated discourses of each country.

The study period is delimited to January through March 2026, following President Trump's speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2026, in which he publicly demanded negotiations for the US acquisition of Greenland. This speech constitutes the primary geopolitical catalyst for the intensification of discourse analysis in this study, and the delimitation ensures that the empirical material captures the strategic communicative responses of all three actors at a moment of crisis. Earlier materials are drawn upon in the background chapters to establish historical continuity but falls outside the analytical focus.

The American media context is represented by four articles from three outlets: the New York Times, CNN, and Fox News. The three outlets occupy distinct positions across the US political and editorial spectrum, from centre-left to centrist-liberal to right-leaning (AllSides, n.d.). This range ensures that the analysis captures the breadth of the American media landscape rather than ideological themes. The Danish media context is represented by the ten articles from two public service outlets: Danmarks Radio and TV2, both selected for their editorial independence and high public trust (Reuters Institute, 2024), and status as the primary vehicles for nationally circulated discourse in Denmark. The decision to focus exclusively on Danish public service media reflects the study's interest in officially sanctioned and widely circulated national discourse rather than peripheral or sensationalist coverage. The Greenlandic media context is represented by five texts from KNR and Sermitsiaq, Greenland's public service broadcaster and primary newspaper respectively. The selection includes both news reporting and institutional analyses from Nordic Safe Cities and

Grønlandsbanken, which are treated as discursive objects rather than objective sources of data, representing how Greenlandic civil society and economic institutions construct and communicate the meaning of the crisis.

The relative distribution of texts across the three media contexts reflects both the analytical focus of the study and the structural realities of the regional media landscapes. The research question focuses on how Greenlandic political actors negotiate sovereignty in response to the US and Danish security discourses, meaning American media serves to establish the acquisition discourse being responded to rather than as the primary object of analysis. The larger representation of Danish and Greenlandic sources reflects this focus. At the same time, the Greenlandic empirical data is smaller than would ideally be the case. As documented in scholarship on Arctic media capacity, Greenlandic organizations operate with significantly more limited resources than their Danish counterparts (Ravn-Højgaard, 2025; Ravn-Højgaard et al., 2018) resulting in a smaller volume of longer analytical pieces and a larger portion of short news bulletins that do not provide sufficient textual depth for critical discourse analysis. Danish public service media therefore serves a dual function in the empirical material, they represent the Danish national discourse and, through its coverage of Greenlandic political actors, providing a more resource rich window into the trilateral dynamic than Greenlandic outlets alone could supply. A full overview of the empirical material, including media outlet, author, date of publication, editorial profile, primary discursive frame, and quotes, is provided in Table B in the appendix.

4.4 Data analysis

In order to answer the research question, the study employs critical discourse analysis. Within this framework, discourse is defined not only as a linguistic output but as a form of social practice (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012), maintaining a dialectical relationship with materials and social realities. The analysis proceeds on the premise that language both reflects and actively creates social structures; these are shifts that at the discursive level can reflexively transform broader structural arrangements over time. A critical component of this analysis involves tracing recontextualization of discourses across different fields, revealing how ideas are adapted, appropriated, or strategically used by social actors to fit new contexts. This analytical approach is particularly suited for the study of strategic communication, where the central question is not only what is communicated but how communicative choices construct political reality, distribute agency, and produce or contest legitimacy. These conditions are the ones under which strategic communication either succeeds or fails in

achieving its objectives. The empirical material was purposely selected to enable this type of analysis. In keeping with the CDA methodological tradition, the aim is depth of textual analysis rather than breadth of coverage, meaning a smaller and more purposively collection of empirical material, which enables a focus on detailed attention to linguistic features, presuppositions, and intertextual relations that the research question require. The variation across national media contexts, editorial positions, and text types allows the analysis to map the full range of discursive strategies in circulation during the study period, and in turn enables the comparative dimension central to the research design.

4.4.1 Critical discourse analysis

While CPR provides the overarching theoretical lens for understanding communication as a site of power, postcolonial discourse theory informs the analysis of hierarchical positioning within geopolitical discourse. CDA serves as the methodological approach through which these discursive constructions are empirically examined (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012).

While Foucault's archaeological approach provides a profound theoretical understanding of how power and knowledge intersect (Foucault, 2003), this thesis utilizes Fairclough's critical discourse analysis to bridge the gap between abstract theory and empirical linguistic data. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework offers a more systematic methodological toolkit for the micro-analysis of textual features, which is essential for investigating the specific research questions for this study (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) views discourse as the social use of language within specific contexts and understands meaning-making (semiosis) as an integral element of social life. Discourse is dialectically related to material and social realities, meaning that ideas and language both shape and are shaped by social structures. Social structures influence practices, which in turn shape concrete events, while changes at the event level can gradually transform broader structures. CDA distinguishes between genres (way of acting and interacting), discourses (way of representing the being or constructing identities). Together, these form an "order of discourse", reflecting how institutions and social fields are organized communicatively. Discourses can also be recontextualized across different fields, where they may be adapted, appropriated, or used strategically by social actors (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012).

Importantly, discourses can become operationalized, translated into practices, identities, and material arrangements, depending on conditions such as power relations and the ability to mobilize support. CDA therefore often works interdisciplinary to analyze the

relationship between semiotic and material dimensions of society. From a cultural political economy perspective, social systems are seen as socially constructed, and completing discourses or “imaginaries” about the future may guide strategies for social change. Some of these imaginaries become institutionalized, while others do not, marketing the processes of selection and implementation central to analysis (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012).

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is also used as a method in this study to identify power relations within the material. This analytic framework is based on a three-dimension

(Berglez, 2019). The first dimension, text, focuses on examining the authors' use of value-laden language. This enables an analysis of linguistic formulations as processes of meaning-making and highlights how language contributes to shaping particular representations and understandings. The second dimension is discursive practice, which concerns how texts function as both products of and resources for processes of production and consumption. Text may be influenced by the writer's experiences, intentions, and interests (Berglez, 2019). Applying this dimension allows the study to explore how certain perspectives are emphasized while others are downplayed or excluded, thereby shaping the overall portrayal presented in the material. The third dimension, sociocultural practice, assumes that the production and consumption of texts are embedded within broader linguistic and societal structures (Berglez, 2019). Within these structures, some discourses become dominant while others remain marginal. This dimension therefore enables a deeper examination of the perspectives and values conveyed in the material and how these are constituted through language within a wider social context.

Fairclough analyzes these dimensions separately before integrating them into a comprehensive interpretation (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000). Applying this approach, each dimension will first be examined individually and subsequently brought together in the analysis. Although alternative methods, such as qualitative content analysis, could have completed the study, Critical Discourse Analysis was selected as a complement due to its particular strength in uncovering power structures embedded in language. The method is therefore considered suitable for providing an in-depth understanding of the discursive patterns presented in the material.

Furthermore, this study adopts CDA not merely as a method of textual analysis but as a transdisciplinary analytical approach that examines the dialectal relations between discourses as well as other social elements (Fairclough, 2010). This choice stems and is motivated by the nature of the research object itself: the communicative strategies employed

and pursued by the Greenlandic, Danish, and American actors are not merely expressions of pre-existing political positions, but constitutive of those positions. As Fairclough (2010) argues, strategies have an inherently strong discursive character: they include imaginaries for change, and narratives that interpret and justify both present conditions and possible futures. By analysing these strategies, it is required to have a method that can examine not only what is said, but how discourse constructs political reality, legitimises particular actors, and marginalises others.

4.4.2 CDA analysis schema

To operationalize Fairclough's (2010) framework, the analysis follows a three-dimensional approach. Firstly the textual dimension (micro): Focuses on the linguistic construction to see how Greenland's search for autonomy is portrayed. It analyzes *naming and reference*, *predication*, *agency*, and key *metaphors*. Secondly, the discursive practice (meso): examines news production and elite sourcing hierarchies to determine who gets a voice. It maps how *competing discourses* are strategically drawn upon and uncovers *presuppositions* that treat certain narratives as "common sense" (hegemony). Thirdly the social practice (macro): evaluates how text reinforces or challenges wider power structures. It critically analyzes *geopolitical power* interests, *colonial echoes*, *legitimacy*, and systematically looking for structural *absences*, what is left unsaid. *Table C (in appendix)

4.5 Methodological considerations

4.5.1 Critical perspective on methods

When reflecting critically on the methodology, the integration of CDA and CPR research requires careful epistemological consideration. Both frameworks share an explicitly normative, power-critical stance; they reject the notion that media texts and strategic communication are neutral vehicles of information. Instead, they treat PR and news production as instruments used by powerful actors to manufacture consent, manage legitimacy, and sustain hegemony (Fairclough, 2010) (L'etang et al., 2016). Critics of these critical paradigms frequently argue that such an approach compromises scientific objectivity, as researchers risk entering the analysis with a biased agenda looking for signs of dominance or resistance. To secure the validity and rigor of this study against "cherry-picking", we implemented a highly systematic coding matrix based on explicit, predefined analytic questions across all micro, meso, and macro levels (see Appendix 3). Furthermore, we

actively searched for discursive contradictions and internal friction within the material, such as Greenland's strategic dilemma of putting long-term independence on pause to mount a defensive response against immediate American coercion ensuring a nuanced representation rather than a forced and uniform narrative.

In the analysis of the material, it is also important to acknowledge that we, as authors of this thesis, cannot fully detach ourselves from the discourse and values to which we belong. Through Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (2010), the study aims to uncover underlying constructions within the material. However, the analysis will inevitably be influenced by our prior experiences and the social context in which we are situated (Lindgren, 2009). All qualitative research is, to some extent, shaped by the researcher's perspective and focus (Bryman, 2016). For this reason, it is particularly important to adhere to established principles of good research practice in qualitative studies. In the analytic phase, we therefore emphasized intersubjectivity in the interpretive processes (*ibid.*). This was achieved by consistently applying the same analytical questions to all texts and grounding the analysis in the theoretical framework. Additionally, excerpts from the empirical material were used to support the interpretations, thereby strengthening the reliability and credibility of the study.

4.5.2 Ethical consideration

Since this study relies on publicly available media texts and official documents, it does not require formal ethical approval regarding human subjects. However, the study adheres to the ethical principle of interpretive integrity. Given the sensitivity of Greenland's colonial history and its path toward self-determination, we have strived to handle the material with a high degree of "analytical empathy", ensuring that Greenlandic voices are not overshadowed by the louder "Great Power" discourse in the final synthesis.

Ethical responsibility has guided our selection and presentation of empirical data; excerpts and quotes from Greenlandic actors have been investigated with care to ensure they are represented faithfully, maintaining their original intent and internal logic without being instrumentalized to fit a rigid theoretical narrative. Beyond the post-colonial dimensions, we have also considered text-based research ethics regarding source handling and contextual integrity. Since the material consists of digital media text, we have been careful to ensure that empirical excerpts are not lifted out of context in a manner that distorts the original meaning or creates misleading representations. In accordance with good research practice, we have strived for maximum transparency by clearly accounting for the origin, context, and

publication framework of the sources. Furthermore, we acknowledge the position of power we possess as researchers in the selection process; deciding which discursive voices are included, excluded, or emphasized is inherently an ethical choice. By systematically applying our analytical matrix across all material, we have minimized the risk of our own preconceptions guiding the selection, thereby further strengthening the ethical and methodological reliability of the study.

4.5.3 Method limitations

A primary limitation of this study is its temporal delimitation. Because the situation in the Arctic is evolving rapidly, the findings represent a “snapshot” of a specific discursive peak in early 2026. Finally, while the study employs a Critical PR perspective to uncover power, it cannot measure the *actual* effects of these discourses on public opinion, only the *intended* and *constructed* meanings within the texts themselves.

Another limitation concerns the selection and political variation of the media material. While the study strives for political breadth, incorporating outlets ranging from the liberal *New York Times* to the conservative *Fox News*, the sample is still constrained by the editorial agendas of mainstream established media. Although these outlets are powerful discursive gatekeepers, they do not represent the entirety of the political spectrum or the fragmented nature of digital discourse. In the Nordic context, the reliance on Danish public service media (DR and TV2) introduces a specific institutional bias. While these outlets are mandated to be impartial, they operate within a national framework that inherently prioritizes the stability of the *Rigsfællesskab*, which may limit the visibility of more radical or anti-establishment perspectives. Similarly, the Greenlandic media landscape is characterized by a high degree of centralization, where *Sermitsiaq* and *KNR* serve as the primary arenas for public debate. This concentration means that while the study captures the most influential Greenlandic narratives, it may overlook marginalized voices or smaller political movements that operate outside these dominant platforms. Consequently, the discourse analyzed reflects the "official" or "elite" negotiation of sovereignty rather than the full diversity of public sentiment across the three nations.

5. Analysis

The ensuing chapter utilizes the three-dimensional CDA framework operationalized in the methodology chapter; this analysis shifts between the textual construction of the media material (micro), the discursive sourcing practices (meso), and the wider geopolitical and postcolonial social practices (macro). The empirical material is organized into the thematic sections to illustrate how these dimensions converge to shape the discourse on Greenlandic sovereignty.

5.1 Situating the Strategic Actors

The empirical material examined in this analysis was produced within a specific and rapidly evolving geopolitical crisis, spanning January through March 2026, in which the United States administration under President Trump publicly and repeatedly demanded the acquisition of Greenland as a matter of national security. This crisis did not emerge from a vacuum, a, but arrived in a context structured by centuries of colonial asymmetry between Denmark and Greenland, a long standing US military presence in the Arctic, and Greenland's ongoing negotiation of its post-colonial identity and political agency within the framework of the 2009 Self-Government Act.

Within this crisis, three groups of social agents are identified as the primary producers and targets of strategic communication: the Greenlandic political actors and institutions whose sovereignty is directly at stake; the Danish state as well as its media institutions, whose role as both a colonial power and formal protector of Greenland is suddenly rendered visible and contested; and the United States administration, whose acquisition discourse constitutes the immediate catalyst for the communicative responses examined here. The actors are in the process of the analysis understood not as pre-given entities with fixed interests, but as social agents whose positions, identities, and legitimacy claims are continuously constructed and contested through discourse (Fairclough, 2010). The strategies that are being pursued by the three agents are therefore not merely political strategies in a conventional sense, but rather discursive strategies that are being pursued through the selection of specific language, frames, and narratives, and always in relation to the strategies demonstrated and employed by the other actors within the same communicative field.

5.2 The Linguistic Arena: Strategic Framing and Discursive Power

At this micro-level (Fairclough, 2010), attention is directed toward how Greenland is discursively constructed. Language is understood as inherently non-neutral (L'etang et al. 2016; Fairclough, 2010; Falkheimer & Heide, 2023); it works as a functional tool used by actors in order to establish a specific version of reality that serves their interests. By examining the formal features of the texts, we can see how power is exercised through vocabulary and grammar to either reinforce or challenge existing geopolitical hierarchies.

5.2.1 Naming and reference

Naming and reference are central mechanisms through which social actors are positioned and meaning is produced, privileging certain interpretations over others (Motion & Leitch, 2016); Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). The American discourse concerning Greenland is predominantly steered by the President of the United States, and the appointed Greenland Envoy, Jeff Landry. Within this discourse, Greenland is consistently constructed through transactional and possessive naming conventions. This linguistic framing is clear in the proposal of a hospital boat and the statement “massive and crucially strategic island”, where the U.S. characterizes Greenland not as a self-governing entity and passive asset, but as a territory in a state of medical and social neglect (Watkins & Nierenberg, *NYT*, February 22 2026; Ataman & Sebastian, *CNN*, 24 January 2026). The narrative constructs Greenland through a geopolitical discourse that emphasises territorial utility and resource value.

The reference to healthcare functions as a discursive strategy that constructs Greenland as a site of humanitarian deficiency. This representation enables the legitimisation of external intervention by producing a narrative in which U.S. involvement appears necessary and self-evident. Trump's hospital boat claims that a hospital ship was sent, despite this not actually occurring, can be interpreted as *communicative inversion* (Dutta, 2016), where symbolic representations present an image of humanitarian assistance while masking underlying power ambitions. By framing the United States as a provider of superior healthcare, the discourse constructs legitimacy and authority, while simultaneously implying that Greenland is in need of external intervention.

By constructing Greenland as a site of neglect, the U.S. discourse generates the salience required to justify external intervention, framed in extreme terms as a form of treatment culminating in the idea of constructing Greenland as a site of neglect, the U.S. discourse generates the salience required to justify external intervention, framed in extreme terms as a form of treatment culminating in the idea of an American “acquisition”. In

contrast, Danish Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen asserts that there is “no need for special health care efforts” (Watkins & Nierenberg, *NYT*, February 22, 2026), which functions as a referential stabilization of order, reaffirming the adequacy of current arrangements and thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the status quo order, reaffirming the adequacy of current arrangements and thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the status quo. By categorizing the existing infrastructure as sufficient, Poulsen linguistically constructs the Danish-Greenlandic administration as a competent provider and a sovereign protector. This naming strategy serves to reject the American humanitarian offer and instead references the “Kingdom” as a fully functional and medically autonomous actor, effectively delegitimizing the U.S. proposal as an unsolicited intrusion. In this context, the Danish counter-strategy aims at naturalization, where the discourse attempts to render the Danish-Greenlandic relationship as “common sense”. By doing so, it neutralizes the American attempt to denaturalize Danish authority and replace it with a U.S.-centric logic. This discursive strategy works to stabilize the existing political order by representing the current governance structure as sufficient and self-evident. Furthermore this can be understood as an attempt to naturalise the Danish-Greenlandic relationship as common sense (Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2022), thereby legitimizing alternative interpretations introduced by U.S. discourse.

Envoy Jeff Landry’s appointment introduces a frame of benevolent integration. Landry’s stated ambition to “make Greenland a part of the United States” (Steinhauser, *Fox News*, 21 January, 2026) utilizes a transitivity pattern where the U.S. is the active, naming subject and Greenland in the passive object of a new identity. However, this external naming is met with a sharp discursive rupture in the Greenlandic parliamentary materials. The *Inatsisartut* rejects these American labels through explicit identity markers, stating: “We do not want to be Americans, we do not want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders” (Ritau, *TV2*, January 10, 2026). The act of self-identification through negation directly challenges the American frame, asserting that the right to name and reference belongs solely to the Greenlandic people.

The US media coverage does not merely report political statements, but actively participates in the production and legitimization of geopolitical meaning. American political actors such as Trump or Jeff Landry are repeatedly positioned as authoritative interpretations of Greenland’s future, while Greenlandic actors primarily appear in reactive or defensive roles, for example, Pipaluk Lynge states that the pursuit of independence must be put “on pause for a bit [...] because we must put all our energy into ensuring we do not become part of the USA” (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January, 2026). This creates an asymmetrical discursive

structure in which the capacity to define political reality becomes concentrated within the U.S.-centred interpretive framework. This reflects how strategic communication operates through the management of visibility, legitimacy, and interpretive authority (L'Etang et al., 2016). The repeated privileging of American security narratives contributes to the normalization of a geopolitical hierarchy in which Greenland is constructed less as a sovereign political actor and more as a strategic object to be managed.

Consequently, Greenlandic voices are discursively marginalized as secondary respondents to externally produced geopolitical imageries rather than positioned as primary authors of their own political future. This unequal distribution of discursive authority contributes to broader processes of normalization and naturalization. Strategic imaginaries gain power when they become operationalized (Motion & Leitch, 2016) through discourse and institutional practices. If Greenland is repeatedly represented as strategically dependent, vulnerable, or in need of external management, such representations can gradually become normalized as common-sense geopolitical assumptions. In turn, this creates symbolic legitimacy for material arrangements such as increased military presence, expanded strategic control, or intensified US influence in the Arctic region.

In the Greenlandic media discourse (Fairclough, 2010), as represented by *KNR* and *Sermitsiaq*, naming and reference function as primary tools of sovereign resistance and de-colonial re-framing. The articles demonstrate a strategic selection of identity-based labels to increase the salience of Greenlandic agency over American transactional interests. While external actors attempt to naturalize Greenland as a geographic or economic object treating/naming it status as a “given” resource, the Greenlandic discourse utilizes nomination to construct a distinct, non-negotiable political subject. This is a struggle over meaning production, where Greenlandic actors seek to de-naturalize the American strategic imaginary of the territory as a mere commodity.

A central referential strategy identified in the joint declaration of the *Inastisisartut* is the use of moral evaluation to categorize American diplomatic interest. By selecting the specific term “disregard” to describe the U.S. approach, Greenlandic political leaders perform a negative attribution that defines the “problem” not as a lack of resources, but as a violation of national dignity. The symbolic power (Dolea, 2016), shifts the frame from Trump’s statement regarding Greenlandic acquisition as a “real estate deal”, to a moral conflict, naming the U.S. not as a “benefactor” or “ally,” but as an actor characterized by a lack of respect for Greenlandic sovereignty. Furthermore this can be seen as an act of counter

problematization; it challenges the logic that Greenland's future can be decided through transactional diplomacy, thereby destabilizing the legitimacy of the American position.

This resistance is further articulated through pejorative nominalization, specifically when referencing the bilateral dialogue between Denmark and the United States. The exclusion of Greenlandic representatives is labeled a “colonialist approach” (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January, 2026). This naming strategy serves as an out-grouping mechanism, where the current geopolitical reality is referenced through a historical lens of oppression. By categorizing the diplomatic process as “colonialist,” the discourse rejects the normalized Danish reference to a “unified Realm” (*Rigsfællesskab*) (Kvist Hansen, *DR*, 28 January, 2026) and instead identifies a power asymmetry that delegitimizes the authority of both Copenhagen and Washington. By labeling the diplomatic exclusion as “colonialist” Greenlandic actors actively expose the “unchallenged models of thoughts” (Motion and Leitch, 2016; Foucault, 1988) that underpin the Danish-American dialogue, effectively challenging the legitimacy of being treated as an object rather than principal author of their own future. This also directs challenge to the erasure of the subaltern voice, resisting the role of being reared as passive object (Dutta, 2016).

Furthermore, the Greenlandic discourse performs a systematic de-commodification of the territory. By consistently referencing the nation through the anchor phrase “Greenland is not for sale” actors such as Vivian Motzfeldt (Former Speaker of the Greenlandic Parliament) (Ritzau, *TV2*, 7 January, 2026) and the Siumut party engage in a discursive rupture (Fairclough, 2010). This naming practice serves to reject the American categorization of the land as an “acquisition” or a “deal”, in turn this discursive rupture that removes Greenland from the category of “Commodity” and re-establishes it within the category of “Inalienable territory”. This is reinforced by the strategic use of collectivization, where the primary reference point is shifted toward the “Greenlandic people” as the sole legitimate owners of the land's future. Finally, the Greenlandic articles highlight a strategy of self-identification through negation. This prevents the "operationalization" of foreign strategic imaginaries (Motion and Leitch, 2016), by asserting a social reality where the land cannot be possessed by external powers. This is most clearly seen in the parliamentary assertion: “We do not want to be Americans, we do not want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders” (Ritzau, *TV2*, January 10, 2026).

By explicitly naming what they are not, the actors create an autonomous referential space that exists outside the two dominant colonial and neo-colonial powers. This act of naming functions as a moral evaluation of identity, asserting that “Greenlander” is a

sovereign category that cannot be subsumed or re-labeled by external strategic actors. This linguistic boundary-setting ensures that the salience of the discourse remains centered on Greenlandic self-determination rather than external geopolitical utility. Moreover the discourse remains centred on the normalization of Greenlandic autonomy, effectively shifting the “conditions of possibility” (Foucault, 1984) for how Greenland’s political future can be thoughtable and communicated.

Danish media on the other hand function as a discursive mediator between US expansionist framings and Greenlandic claims to sovereignty. Rather than acting as neutral observers, they actively participate in stabilizing and negotiating geopolitical meaning within the Denmark–Greenland–U.S. triangle. When Lars Løkke Rasmussen (Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs) (*DR*, 6 January, 2026) describes US representations of Greenland as a “misreading”, this can be understood as referential stabilization (Fairclough, 2010). By reasserting “The Kingdom” as the primary reference point, Danish discourse seeks to counter US led naturalization of Greenland as a strategic object.

In this discursive struggle, the US constructs a logic in which Greenland is implicitly represented as lacking sufficient governance, thereby appearing “exposed” to external influence. This functions as a counter-narrative, where the salience of a US-defined crisis is reduced by reclassifying it as rhetorical exaggeration rather than factual threat. This discursive logic represents the territory as lacking sufficient governance, and therefore exposed to external influence, particularly from Russia and China in the Arctic (Kvist Hansen, *DR*, January 28, 2026; *DR*, January 6, 2026). By reinterpreting these claims as misreadings, Danish discourse disrupts this causal chain. If the depiction of Greenland as a security vacuum is delegated at the level of interpretation, the corresponding treatment recommendation, namely increased US involvement or acquisition, loses its justificatory basis. This can be understood as the introduction of an *abstract strategic imaginary* (Motion and Leitch, 2016), where the US seeks to replace the existing post-colonial order with a new reality centred on transactional security. By framing Greenland as needing humanitarian aid and security, the US attempts to make this expansionist vision appear not as a radical political move, but as a necessary operationalization of regional stability. In this sense, the Danish counter-frame does not only contest the severity of the threat, but as the authority that can define it as a threat in the first place. As a result, the discursive conflict shifts from questions of empirical security conditions to a struggle over interpretive legitimacy. What is at stake is not only whether Greenland constitutes a strategic vulnerability, but who possesses the

authority to define the presence or absence of such vulnerability within the geopolitical imagination.

Furthermore, Danish media suggests that Vance's criticism of Denmark could lead to a "ritual of humiliation similar to what was seen with Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in February last year" (Honoré, *TV2*, 14 Jan). By drawing parallels to Ukraine, Denmark is repositioned within a potential relationship of vulnerability to the United States. This implies that the US is no longer constructed solely as an ally, but also as a potential actor of coercion, shifting the symbolic power (Dolea, 2016) and moral weight of the relationship.

5.2.2 Predication

The predictional pattern can be understood as the construction of a specific subject position within a dominant strategic imaginary (Motion and Leitch, 2016). A clear problem definition is where Greenland is framed through its "smallness" and "demographic limitation", made visible by the quote "we are only 57,000 people" (*Sermitsiaq*, 2026, 18 February). By making these specific attributes salient, the discourse performs a diagnostic function, suggesting that Greenland's primary challenge is an inherent lack of capacity.

Rather than merely describing Greenland as small or vulnerable, the discourse constitutes Greenland as a "needing subject," whose agency is structurally limited by its demographic scale. By consistently linking Greenland's political potential to its population size, the discourse establishes a condition of possibility (Foucault, 2002) where full sovereignty appears almost "unthinkable" or irrational. In this sense, the "smallness" of Greenland becomes an unchallenged mode of thought that justifies external governance. The positioning performs a crucial function, it constrains Greenland's discursive capacity to act independently and presupposes external representation as a necessary condition (Fairclough, 2010) for political agency. This is an operationalization (Motion & Leitch, 2016) of a dependency discourse; by making "vulnerability" the central meaning produced around Greenlandic identity, it becomes materially consequent. It shifts the geopolitical focus away from Greenlandic rights and toward a logic of protection and acquisition. This is made visible in the journalistic narrations of the event, where the U.S. is portrayed as assertive by taking on a "more aggressive posture" (Smialek, *NYT*, 18 January 2026), suggesting a shift toward a more confrontational approach. In response to the American assertiveness, the Greenlandic politician Pipaluk Lynge describes the United States as "bombastic," adding that "this is how they speak" (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January 2026). These predications do not merely describe a style of communication; they function to naturalize an image of the U.S. as a

rhetorically forceful and dominant hegemon (Fairclough, 2010). By consistently attributing “aggressiveness” to the U.S., the discourse establishes a strategic imaginary (Motion & Leitch, 2016), where American influence is synonymous with confrontational power, rather than collaborative diplomacy.

The normalization (Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2022) of the U.S. as an aggressive power, is apparent in statements made by European political actors, including Emmanuel Macron, in which he describes the U.S. rhetoric as “bullies”, similarly António Costa (President of the European Council) emphasizes the importance of “cordial and respectful” relations with its “strategic partners”, in contrast to the “brash assaults” associated with the Trump administration (Ataman & Sebastian, *CNN*, 24 January, 2026). This hierarchical representation serves to maintain hegemony (Fairclough, 2010) and contributes with a narrative of legitimacy. By contrasting Trump’s perceived “insanity” with the rationality of EU actors, therein Denmark, the discourse consequently also performs a legitimization of the Realm, and the stability of Denmark and its allies functions as a discursive shield, protecting the status quo against American expansionism.

Similarly, the Greenlandic politician Aqqaluk Lynge, refers to Trump as a “madman” and warns that “if the American midterms are cancelled by the President, we will know that a dictatorship has begun in the USA, and then there will be no turning back for Greenland” (*Sermitsiaq*, 18 February, 2026). This not only reinforces the construction of Trump as unpredictable and extreme, but also introduces a discourse of existential threat, linking US domestic politics directly to Greenland's future. The dramatic tone of the Greenlandic statement amplifies a sense of urgency and crisis, which can be understood as a strategic way of framing the situation as high-stakes and irreversible. Crisis here functions as a “carrier of normalization” (Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2021), by representing the situation as existential and irreversible (“no turning back”), the discourse creates a condition of possibility (Foucault, 1988) where continued external protection appears as the only rational response to an unpredictable threat. Together, these descriptions construct an image of unpredictability and dominance, while also suggesting a potential shift toward authoritarianism: what is at stake is not merely security policy, but the symbolic power (Dolea, 2016) to define Greenland’s political identity in the global arena. Moreover, by deconstructing these texts, it becomes evident how language is used to maintain hegemony, positing EU and Denmark as the rational, America as unpredictable and Greenlandic as a passive subject. In this sense, crisis is not only represented but actively produced through language.

5.2.3 Agency

The empirical material on Greenland illustrates a complex negotiation of agency in the face of intense external pressure, particularly from the United States under Trump. Through framing, both media and political actors construct the roles of the involved parties. As is evident from the material, Greenland is frequently framed as a passive actor, whose fate is determined by more powerful states. Trump's statements "Whether you like it or not" and "One way or the other, we're going to have Greenland [...] even if we do it the hard way" (Ataman & Sebastian, *CNN*, 24 Jan), positions Greenland as an object rather than an agent (Dutta, 2016), while the U.S. and Denmark are depicted as active decision-makers.

A common denominator in the empirical material is Greenland being spoken about rather than with, reinforcing its position as an object of geopolitical interest rather than a political subject with agency. The dynamic further demonstrates an unequal distribution of communicative authority, where the right to define geopolitical reality is restricted to dominant actors, which can be understood as an operationalization of strategic imaginaries (Motion & Letich, 2016). Trump, and his administration, through their statement assumes the role of the sole authoritative author of the narrative, attempting to establish a new reality where Greenland is a transactional commodity. By excluding Greenlandic representatives, the U.S. discourse attempts to naturalize a power structure where the "subaltern" has no legitimate right to participate in high-level meaning production. This is further exemplified by statements made by Trump in regards to how far he'd go to acquire Greenland, such as, "You will find out" and "No going back" (Steinhauser, *Fox News*, Jan 21, 2026).

Greenlandic actors respond and engage with rhetorical strategies, such as symbolic and communicative actions that assert sovereignty and identity. Statements such as Chairman Múte B. Egede's "We stand together, Kalaallit Nunaat is ours" (Munk Veirum, *Sermitsiaq*, 8 March, 2026) creates a visible narrative of self-determination and collective resilience. This demonstrates how strategic communication can function as a tool to exercise agency, shape external perceptions, and resist dominating frames (Falkheimer & Heide, 2023). Former Greenlandic politician Aqqaluk Lynge, highlights structural limitations within the discourse: "An independent Greenland is synonymous with a power vacuum in the Arctic, and that is something the USA cannot accept. Therefore, the only way forward for Greenland is to stand clearly and firmly with Denmark" (*Sermitsiaq*, 18 February 2026). This reflects a nuanced understanding of agency as negotiated within geopolitical realities; Greenland must assert

itself where possible while navigating constraints imposed by population size, economic capacity, and security dependencies.

In contrast to the overt expansion of the U.S., Denmark engages in a stabilizing strategy, by responding to U.S. claims without explicitly validating their underlying logic. This subtle resistance serves to protect the legitimacy of the current constitutional order while simultaneously circumscribing Greenland's independent agency. Denmark's approach can be understood as a defense of its own strategic imaginary (Motion & Leitch, 2016). While the U.S. attempts to naturalize a new reality centered around transactional security, Denmark utilizes constructive ambiguity to re-stabilize the status quo. By positioning the "Kingdom" as the only rational and stable interpretive framework, Danish discourse effectively counters American attempts at operationalizing a more aggressive geopolitical presence in the Arctic.

However, this stabilization also functions as a tool of exclusion. The Danish-American dialogue continues to center on the established powers, reinforcing asymmetrical power relations. The social license (Dutta, 2016) to speak authoritatively about Greenland's future remains concentrated in Copenhagen and Washington. This results in communicative erasure, where Greenlandic sovereignty is silenced through the systematic control of the discursive field. Ultimately, Denmark's role as a "protector" serves a dual purpose: it resists American dominance while ensuring that Greenland remains an object within the Danish-led strategic imaginary (Motion & Letich, 2016), rather than becoming an independent principal author of its own geopolitical future.

5.2.3 Metaphors

Metaphors serve as the primary analytical tool in this section performing a predication function, actively naturalizing specific power dynamics rather than merely describing a situation. In this analysis, metaphors operationalize strategic imaginaries (Motion & Leitch, 2016) to assign roles and dictate whose agency is visible or erased. Empirical events are analyzed not as physical realities but as entirely discursive constructions where actors compete to define Greenland's political status.

The most significant analytical metaphor emerges from Trump's Truth Social post: the proposal to send a "great hospital boat" (Watkins & Nierenberg 22 February, 2026) to Greenland to "take care of the many people who are "sick", and "not" being taken care of there. By mapping the domain of medical care onto the domain of geopolitics, this metaphor performs what can be described as humanitarian imperialism, the discursive conversion of a territorial acquisition ambition into an act of benevolent rescue. The metaphor constructs

Greenland as a territory marked by vulnerability, neglect, and institutional insufficiency. The problem is defined as a healthcare crisis in Greenland, implying systemic neglect. The causal attribution falls on Denmark, constructed as an incompetent or indifferent “administrator”. The moral evaluation positions the United States as a capable and caring actor intervening where others have failed. The treatment recommendation follows logically: American involvement, framed not as a conquest, but as care.

What makes this metaphor particularly powerful is its presuppositional structure. By stating that Greenlanders are “sick and not being taken care of”, Trump’s discourse treats as given what is in fact deeply contested, namely that Greenland is in a state of humanitarian crisis requiring external intervention. This presupposition is empirically false: as the New York Times itself notes in their article, Greenlanders have the right to healthcare that is free at the point of use, confirmed by the Nordic Council (Watkins & Nierenberg, New York Times, 22 February 2026). Therefore the metaphor operates as what Fairclough (2010) terms a naturalization strategy: it attempts to make an ideologically loaded claim appear as an observable fact, thereby removing it from the realm of political debate. Furthermore this constitutes communicative inversion (Dutta, 2016): the rhetoric of care functions as a legitimating surface for underlying power ambitions, strategically obscuring the motive of an acquisition beneath the language of humanitarianism. The audience design of the hospital boat metaphor is also analytically significant: Trump’s Truth Social post is ostensibly directed at the Greenlandic population, positioned as the beneficiaries of the American healthcare system. However, the actual strategic audiences are multiple and distinct. The American domestic audience receives a signal of presidential action and national benevolence. In turn, European allies receive a provocation designed to test the limits of their responses. The Danish government receives an implicit indictment of its administrative competence. The metaphor is therefore constructed to function differently for each audience, an ambiguity that allows Trump to maintain plausible deniability while the geopolitical message remains legible to its intended recipients. In comparison, the Danish media discourse frames the U.S. the U.S. boat proposal perspective as “the wrong picture,” the Danish state defines the problem as a misunderstanding rather than a threat. This constitutes a hegemonic discourse (Fairclough, 2010) move as it naturalizes the existing Danish-Greenland political “arrangement” as legitimate, stable, and fundamentally, non-conflictual. The metaphor silences the colonial and geopolitical tensions underlying the debate by repositioning disagreement as a matter of incorrect perception rather than structural inequality or competing sovereign claims. In this sense, the discourse works ideologically by preserving

the existing order of discourse and limiting the space in which alternative political interpretations have the opportunity to appear reasonable or necessary.

Another dominant American metaphor, is the framing of Greenland as a “real estate deal” and an “acquisition”, which operates through a different, but complementary mechanism. Where the hospital boat metaphor humanises the US, the metaphor of a “real estate deal” removes the human element from Greenland entirely. Trump’s consistent use of statements such as “acquisition”, “taking over,” and the suggestion that the US will have Greenland “one way or the other” constructs the territory as a transferable commodity rather than as a self-governing people (Steinhauser *Fox News*, 21 January 2026; Smialek, *NYT*, 18 January 2026). This wording can be described as the erasure of social actors (Fairclough, 2010), turning a populated, institutionally complex political entity into a passive object of transaction. The real estate deal metaphor constructs the situation not as a question of international law, sovereignty, or self-determination, but as negotiation over property. When this construction of narrative is accepted, the logical response becomes a matter of price and terms rather than rights and agency. The Greenlandic parliament gave the response that Greenland is “not for sale”, (Uldall, *DR*, 13 January, 2026; Ritzau, *TV2*, 7 January 2026) which constitutes an effective counter discursive move. However, when the Greenlandic political actors accept the market vocabulary of the American frame, and then negate it, they are performing what can be described as a discursive rupture. The Greenlandic political actors shift the salience from Greenland as a commodity with a price, to Greenland as a sovereign territory with intrinsic and non-negotiable value. In CDA terms, this moves Greenland out of the market domain and into the domain of peoplehood and self-determination (Fairclough, 2010). This counter-metaphor is a legitimacy defence strategy, it refuses the terms of the American frame and insists on an alternative ontological category within which Greenlandic rights become legally and morally non-negotiable. The discursive rupture of “we are not for sale” (Uldall, *DR*, 13 January, 2026) is therefore not merely a political rejection, but a reclamation of the subject position that the real estate metaphor has worked to deny.

In contrast to the American metaphors, which construct Greenland as an object of external action, the Greenlandic media discourse deploys a metaphor that actively asserts agency and subjectivity. Pipaluk Lynge describes the necessity of “banging on the table” in order to secure information and inclusion from Christiansborg (the Danish parliament) (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January 2026). This metaphor operates on multiple analytical levels simultaneously. At the textual level, it is a predication of strength and active agency. The

Greenlandic actor is physically assertive, demanding to be heard rather than passively receiving decisions made elsewhere. This counters the American patient metaphor, in which Greenlanders are constructed as recipients of care rather than political subjects with their own voice. The table-banging metaphor is significant precisely because of what it presupposes: that Greenland has the right to be at the table in the first place, and that its current exclusion from security discussions constitutes a violation of those rights rather than a natural or acceptable state of affairs. When Lynge states that “it is a colonialist approach when we are treated like second-class citizens,” (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January 2026) she names the structural continuity between historical Danish colonial governance, and the present day exclusion of Greenlandic representatives from the Kingdom’s diplomatic negotiations. This is countering the hegemonic discursive move: it refuses the naturalization of Greenlandic exclusion and reframes that exclusion as an ideological practice must be actively identified and resisted (Fairclough, 2010). The table-banging metaphor presupposes that Greenland has the right to be at the table, and that its current exclusion constitutes a withdrawal of the conditions under which consent can meaningfully be given. Drawing on legitimacy, this metaphor performs legitimacy directed simultaneously at two audiences: toward Denmark it is a demand for structural inclusion, and toward the international community it is a performance of Greenlandic political subjectivity. This in turn constructs Greenland as an actor capable of and entitled to self representation.

By contrast, the Danish discourse deploys its own metaphor in the *DR* article by Kvist Hansen (28 January, 2026), where Bo Lidegaard (Greenlandic historian expert) describes the joint European tour of Frederiksen and Nielsen as evidence that the Realm “has been welded together”. By applying this metaphor to the Danish-Greenlandic relationship, the discourse performs several simultaneous ideological operations. It reframes the external crisis as an opportunity to strengthen the Realm rather than the crisis disrupting it. It suggests that the bond between Denmark and Greenland now is structural and permanent, and the most significant aspect, it erases the asymmetry between the two: in a welded joint the materials are equal, but in the Danish-Greenlandic relationship it evidently is not.

This can be seen as naturalization operating at the level of a metaphor. The welding statement implies a particular power arrangement between the two countries: the Danish administrative authority over Greenland's foreign and security policy, presented as a natural and mutually established state of affairs rather than a historically produced and politically disputed one. This connects to Hermann’s (2021) term camouflaged colony, meaning that colonial power is exercised through the language of partnership and mutual benefit rather

than through domination. Combined with the welding metaphor, it illustrates the logic for the contemporary geopolitical crisis, while leaving the underlying colonial structure intact. In this metaphor, Greenland appears as a subject, a partner, co-traveller on the European tour, but the subject position is still managed by Denmark rather than claimed by Greenland itself. Denmark is the decisionmaker regarding when and how Greenlandic agency is made visible, and to whom. The welding metaphor serves as a strategic function within the trilateral discourse (L'Etang et al., 2016). It signals to Washington that Copenhagen (and Greenland) constitutes a unified front that cannot be divided, which in turn undermines the US strategy of bypassing Copenhagen to approach Nuuk directly. At the same time it signals to Greenlandic audiences that Denmark regards the relationship as a genuine solidarity, rather than just administrative convenience. However, as Pipaluk Lynge's statement on "banging on the table" makes clear, this projected unity is disputed from within. The same crisis that Lidegaard frames as having welded the Realm together, is instead framed by Lynge as having exposed the colonial asymmetries that the Danish guise of unity discourse has historically worked to conceal. The Realm is welded together, but only because Greenland keeps having to bang on the table in order to be included in it.

These observations constitute the most visible site of strategic struggle in the empirical material. It is here that the fundamental question of Greenland's political status, subject or object, is most directly contested through language. The linguistic choices function as a form of strategy, by reducing a sovereign nation and its population to mere commercial assets or a site of humanitarian deficiency, the American discourse actively delegitimizes Greenlandic political autonomy. This demonstrates how state-level strategic communication utilizes paternalistic frames to establish a structural power asymmetry, where the more resource-rich actor claims the sole authority to define the political and security reality of the weaker actor.

5.3 Discursive Practices and Asymmetries within the Rhetorical Arena

At this level, the analysis examines intertextuality, sourcing, presuppositions, and normalization in order to understand how meaning is constructed and how particular interpretations are made possible (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999).

5.3.1 Intertextuality and sourcing

The analysis reveals notable differences in sourcing practices across Greenlandic, US, and Danish media, while also highlighting a shared reliance on elite and institutional voices.

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Greenlandic media include local political actors, such as Aqqaluk Lynge and Pipaluk Lynge, as well as references to national institutions like the Greenlandic parliament (Inatsisartut) and the Central Bank of Greenland. This suggests a degree of internal representation, at the same time, Greenlandic media reveal an interesting tension between local agency and geopolitical pressure. On the one hand, local actors such as Múte B. Egede and Vivian Motzfeldt are positioned as active subjects, emphasizing narratives such as “Kalaallit Nunaat is ours” (*Sermitsiaq*, 2026, 8 March), which foreground local legitimacy. On the other hand these narratives are consistently saturated alongside references to external actors such as Trump, the United States, and NATO. This creates a discursive arena in which local claims to sovereignty intersect with geopolitical realities. Through this dual sourcing, Greenland is positioned not merely as an object, but as a negotiating actor operating within asymmetrical power relations.

In contrast, US media predominantly reflect what can be understood as a “view from Washington,” prioritizing Western political actors and institutions. Figures such as Trump, Marco Rubio, and JD Vance are frequently cited, alongside NATO representatives and European leaders such as Emmanuel Macron and Donald Tusk. Greenland is often referred to in abstract or objectifying terms, such as the “island” (Watkins & Nierenberg, *NYT*, 22 February, 2026; Smialek, *NYT* 18 January, 2026; Steinhauser, *Fox News*, 21 January, 2026) or a strategic territory (Steinhauser, 21 January, 2026) rather than through the voices of its population. Notably, every American article in the empirical material, with the sole exception of Atman and Sebastian (*CNN*, January 24, 2026), reduces Greenland to “the island.” This stands in sharp contrast to the Danish and Greenlandic material, which conceptualizes Greenland as a distinct nation, society, or political community. The sourcing pattern is the meso-level mechanism where the object/subject distinction identified in the textual analysis is reproduced: Greenland as the object of the American media discourse, not only as it is described in objectifying terms, but because it is denied the sourcing access that would allow

it to speak as a subject. The pattern of intertextual sourcing can be further understood as the construction of an epistemic hierarchy. The selection of European elite political actors such as Macron and Tusk as authoritative sources on Greenland, contributes to a discursive allocation of “knowledge rights”, where the legitimacy to define Greenland is granted to external elites rather than to Greenlandic actors themselves. In this sense, economic authority is externalized, and Greenland is positioned as an object of knowledge rather than a producer of knowledge itself (Dutta, 2016). When Macron frames Greenland within a European value-based order in opposition to “bullies” (i.e. the United States) (Atman & Sebastian, *CNN*, 24 January, 2026), this constitutes a form of discursive substitution (Fairclough, 2010), in which the Greenlandic voices are effectively replaced by European interpretations of Greenlandic geopolitical meaning. By consistently citing NATO representatives and European leaders, the U.S. media creates an elite alignment structure (Motion & Leitch, 2016) in which authoritative voices collectively validate a shared geopolitical framing centred on security. Within this structure, Greenlandic actors are rarely positioned as principals of interpretation (Fairclough, 2010), but rather as secondary participants whose perspectives are filtered through pre-established elite consensus. Consequently, Greenland is granted limited visibility as a speaking subject.

Danish media occupy an intermediate position, functioning as a mediator within the Realm. They incorporate both Danish governmental actors and Greenlandic political representatives, such as Vivian Motzfeldt and Jens-Frederik Nielsen, while also drawing on expert voices like Martin Breum (author on Arctic affairs). At the same time, there is a strong emphasis on Danish institutions including the Foreign Policy Committee and the broader Danish state (“the Kingdom”), as well as security-related actors such as NATO. The frequent references to external threats, including Russian and Chinese activities, contribute to a security-oriented framing that legitimizes continued Danish and Western involvement. Through this balancing act, the Danish discourse is positioned between loyalty to NATO and their role as Greenland’s formal representative. Danish media can be understood as a *gatekeeping actor* within this intertextual field, by selectively incorporating Greenlandic political figures such as Vivian Motzfeldt, in which they create an appearance of inclusivity and dialogue. However, these voices are consistently embedded within a Danish interpretive framework structured around things such as the Realm . This constitutes a hegemonic practice (Fairclough, 2010) in which inclusion is strategically managed: Greenlandic voices are allowed to speak, but only within discursive boundaries defined by Danish state interests. This produces what can be described as controlled intertextuality, where the presence of

Greenlandic actors serves to legitimize the broader Danish narrative rather than challenge it. Greenland is granted a partial subject position: present, visible, and quoted. However, only within discursive boundaries that Denmark controls. The subject position is performed, rather than genuinely held. This constitutes a hegemonic practice (Fairclough, 2010) in which inclusion is strategically managed: Greenlandic voices are allowed to speak, but only within discursive boundaries defined by Danish state interests. This produces what can be described as controlled intertextuality, where the presence of Greenlandic actors serves primarily to legitimize the broader Danish narrative and reinforce the Danish position against the US, rather than opening space for discussions of full Greenlandic independence. In this sense, Greenlandic voices function as “alibi voices” that confirm the legitimacy of the Realm, while maintaining the existing power structure. Greenland is therefore granted a partial subject position: present, visible, and quoted, but only within discursive boundaries that Denmark controls. The subject position is performed rather than genuinely held.

Voices from ordinary Greenlandic citizens, grassroots organizations, and non-elite actors are largely absent across all three media contexts. This absence limits the representation of Greenland as a lived society and instead reinforces its construction as a geopolitical object discussed and defined by external actors. The absence of grassroots institutions and everyday voices reflects the erasure of the subaltern (Dutta, 2016). This reflects what Munshi and Kurian (2016) identify as a fundamental hierarchy of publics within PR discourse, ranging from dominant elite publics that are audibly represented, to many that are not represented at all. In order for PR to genuinely serve the public, it must engage with the full range of citizenship rather than reproducing institutional and elite voices as the default. Even when Greenlandic elite actors for example Vivian Motzfeldt are included, the lived experiences of ordinary Inuit populations remain largely absent from the discourse. As a result, Greenland is primarily constructed as a juridico-political entity rather than a lived social space. This reproduces a colonial logic of representation, where Greenland is rendered legible only through institutional and elite-mediated narratives, while its population is discursively reduced to a passive backdrop for geopolitical negotiation.

The distribution of voices contributes to a specific problem definition, where Greenland is implicitly framed as an issue to be managed by external actors. The dominance of Western political sources further supports a particular interpretation and suggested solution, where geopolitical interests are prioritized. This uneven sourcing reflects a discursive practice that reproduces hierarchical power relations by privileging certain voices as authoritative while marginalizing others (Fairclough, 2010). The selection of voices is not

neutral, but reflects a strategic process through which certain actors are given authority to define the situation. This sourcing pattern can be understood as a form of strategic communication aimed at managing legitimacy and influence (L'etang et al., 2016). By amplifying Western and governmental actors while limiting Greenlandic agency, this discourse contributes to securing acceptance for existing power structures, reinforcing asymmetrical geopolitical relations under the guise of neutral reporting.

This dual sourcing pattern is the closest the empirical material comes to constructing Greenland as an explicit subject, but even here, the agenda is set by external actors. The structural dimension of legitimacy struggle becomes visible through what Curtin and Gaither (2007, cited in L'Etang et al., 2016) term “developed world moral superiority” where resource rich actors enjoy disproportionate media access. This dynamic is directly visible in the sourcing patterns identified, where Greenlandic voices are systematically absent from American media and present in a mediated form in Danish media, meaning that Greenlandic legitimacy claims must work harder to be heard. Furthermore, the sourcing patterns reveal a structural asymmetry in discursive gatekeeping. By systematically omitting Greenlandic voices, especially the American media constructs a closed communication space. This illustrates a core tenet of CPR (L'Etang et al., 2016): organizational and state dominance is maintained not through message volume, but by controlling access to the rhetoric arena, effectively silencing the asymmetric actor's capacity to engage in counter-branding or narrative resistance.

5.3.2 Strategic Discursive Constructions

Greenland media construct multiple, and at times competing, frames that shape the understanding of Greenland's political situation. A dominant discourse (Motion & Leitch, 2016) presents Greenland as vulnerable and limited in capacity, emphasizing its small population and lack of economic and institutional resources. This is evident in statements such as “we are only 57,000 people” (*Sermitsiaq*, 18 February, 2026) and references to “uncertainty bordering on fear” (*Sermitsiaq*, 7 March, 2026), which define the core problem as one of structural limitation. Moreover, this framing of smallness as a vulnerability is echoed in the Danish discourse, where Danish King Frederik's speech during a state visit to Lithuania frames smallness not as a weakness but as a source of solidarity: “the strength of small nations lies in standing together” (Ritzau, *DR*, 28 January 2026). While both discourses acknowledge the structural constraint, they are different in their moral evaluation, the Greenlandic discourse constructs smallness as a condition that requires protection, whereas

the Danish royal discourse reframes it as a basis for collective resilience and international fellowship.

A geopolitical security narrative positions Greenland within a broader context of great power competition. References to “massive pressure from the U.S.” (*Sermitsiaq*, 7 March 2026), concerns about a “slow takeover” (*Sermitsiaq*, 18 February 2026) and discussions of NATO cooperation (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January 2026) construct an environment of external threat and strategic importance. Within this construction, external actors are simultaneously portrayed as both necessary partners and potential risks. Closely linked to this is a discourse of dependency in which Denmark is constructed as a stabilizing and necessary partner. Statements emphasizing the “Unity of the Realm” (*Sermitsiaq*, 2026, 18 February) and the need to “stand firmly with Denmark” (*Sermitsiaq*, 18 March 2026) suggest that continued cooperation is the most viable solution to Greenland’s challenges. However, this is counterbalanced by a resilience frame, where Greenland is depicted as a politically active and unified actor. Expressions such as “Kalaallit Nunaat is ours” (*Sermitsiaq*, 8 March 2026) and references to collective action and unity emphasize agency, identity, and resistance to external influence.

In contrast, U.S. media construct a more externally oriented and geopolitically driven discourse, where Greenland is primarily positioned in relation to American strategic interests. A dominant discourse constructs Greenland as a *strategic asset* frequently described as a “massive and crucially strategic island” (Steinhauser, Fox News, January 21, 2026) and represented in terms of its location between the Arctic and the Atlantic. This positions Greenland not as a political community, but as a resource or territory of geopolitical value. Within this discourse, statements such as “the United States needs Greenland for the purpose of national security” (Steinhauser, Fox News, January 21, 2026) define the core problem in terms of security and control, thereby legitimatising U.S. interest in acquiring the territory. Closely linked to this is a security-oriented representation, where the situation is constructed as part of a broader geopolitical struggle. References to “threats of invasion”, “tariff threats” (Ataman & Sebastian, *CNN*, 24 January, 2026) and warnings of a potential “real war” (Smialek, *NYT*, 18 January 2026) situate Greenland within an escalating conflict between major powers. This is reinforced by statements by Trump such as “we’re going to have Greenland [...] do it the hard way,” (Ataman & Sebastian, *CNN*, 24 January, 2026) which constructed the issue as one of power, coercion, and strategic necessity. Within this discourse, conflict rather than cooperation becomes the dominant logic. At the same time, a discourse of pressure and escalation frame is evident, where U.S. actions are described as part of an

ongoing “pressure campaign” (Smialek, *NYT*, 18 January, 2026) against Greenland and its allies. Terms such as “aggressive posture”, “brash assaults” and “taboo-shattering behaviour” (ibid.) construct the United States, particularly Trump. As a disruptive and dominant actor. This discourse is further reinforced through responses from Western political actors, where figures such as Emmanuel Macron and Donald Tusk contrast European values of cooperation with what is described as coercive or aggressive U.S. behavior. Similarly, Mark Carney characterizes the situation as “a rupture, not a transition,” emphasizing the extent to which U.S. actions are perceived as fundamentally destabilizing to the existing international order.

Greenland is repeatedly referred to in abstract or objectifying terms such as “the island” (Watkins & Nierenberg, 2026, *NYT*, February 22; Steinhauser, *Fox News*, 2026, January 21; Smialek, *NYT*, 2026, January 18), with little attention paid to its population, society, or political agency. This discursive pattern contributes to the marginalisation of Greenlandic voices and constructs Greenland as a passive object within a broader geopolitical game, rather than as a sovereign actor with its own interests and decision-making capacity. As a result, the discourse not only reflects but also reproduces a hierarchical worldview in which great powers act, while smaller nations are acted upon.

Danish media constructs a more balanced but still security-oriented discursive representations, where Greenland is positioned within the context of the Danish Realm and broader geopolitical tensions. A dominant discourse can be described as a mediating and responsibility narrative, in which Denmark presents itself as a stabilizing actor managing both external pressure and internal relations. Statements such as “we take care of the Kingdom” (Ritzau, *DR*, January 6, 2026) and the emphasis on defining “red lines” (Honoré, *DR*, January 14, 2026) in negotiations with the United States construct Denmark as a responsible guardian of both sovereignty and stability. At the same time, a clear security-oriented threat discourse is present, where Greenland is situated within a broader geopolitical landscape involving the United States, Russia, and China. However, this threat narrative is not primarily constructed by Danish actors themselves, but originates from statements by Trump, who describes Greenland as being “surrounded by Russian and Chinese ships” (Dall, *DR*, January 2, 2026). Danish media reproduce and engage with this discourse, while simultaneously challenging it. For instance, Danish political actors such as Lars Løkke Rasmussen, explicitly reject this depiction as exaggerated or misleading, arguing that such narratives “do not serve the Kingdom’s interests” (Ritzau, *DR*, January 6, 2026). This creates a dual discursive construction in which externally introduced threat perceptions are both circulated and contested within Danish media discourse.

In parallel, a discourse of unity and cooperation is evident, emphasizing the importance of the *Rigsfællesskab* and collective decision-making. Danish media explicitly foreground statements from the Greenlandic political sphere, including a joint declaration by all five parties in the Greenland parliament (*Inatsisartut*), who states “We do not want to be Americans, we do not want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders” and emphasize that “we stand together” (Ritzau, *TV2*, January 10, 2026) on the right to their land. By highlighting these statements, Danish media amplify a narrative of internal Greenlandic unity and a shared political identity, while simultaneously reinforcing the idea that Greenland's future should be negotiated within existing institutional frameworks. This is further reflected in the portrayal of political actors such as Vivian Motzfeldt (Uldall, *DR*, January 13, 2026), who formed as both assertive and cooperative, navigating between demands for greater Greenlandic influence and practical necessity of working with Danish structures.

Additionally, a discourse of pragmatic constraint emerges, where independence is construed as desirable but currently unrealistic due to geopolitical conditions. This is explicitly articulated in Danish media through the souring of political actors such as Alex Ahrendtsen (Member of the Danish Parliament) who states that independence “cannot be done because of the geopolitical situation” (Erdem & Gjerding Nielson, *TV2*, 19 January, 2026). By foregrounding such statements, Danish media construct external geopolitical pressures as structural constraints on Greenland's autonomy, thereby reinforcing the necessity of continued alignment with Denmark and NATO.

5.3.3 Presuppositions

The presuppositions embedded across the three media contexts reveals how geopolitical assumptions are treated as common sense rather than contested claims, which in turn naturalizes particular power arrangements while hiding their ideological character.

In the American discourse, the presuppositions often construct Greenland as governable and strategically available to external actors. Trump's statements of “the United States needs Greenland for the purpose of national security” and “anything less is unacceptable” (Steinhauser, *Fox News*, 21 January 2026), shows an entitlement to define Greenland's future as self-evident, positioning sovereignty as negotiable and resistance as irrelevant. This is made clear by the contradiction between “I don't want to use force” and “we're going to have Greenland the hard way” (Ataman & Sebastian, *CNN*, 24 January 2026), which creates ambiguity: a peaceful image and a threat exists within the same discourse, making the presuppositions of force available without being explicitly stated.

Together, they reframe geopolitical ambitions as a humanitarian necessity and important for security while removing Greenlandic agency from the equation entirely. This can be seen as the normalization of global power asymmetries through communication, where structural inequalities are reproduced as common sense (Dutta, 2016; Fairclough, 2010).

In comparison, the Danish discourse constructs a counter-presupposition that the American narrative is simply incorrect: “an incorrect picture is being painted from the American side” and “a misreading of what is up and what is down” (Ritzau, *DR*, 6 January 2026). The quotes showcase Danish epistemic authority of what is factually true about Greenland, while “ownership of Greenland is out of the question” (Honoré, *TV2*, 14 January 2026) and “we demand respect” (Ritzau, *DR*, 6 January 2026) treat sovereignty as already settled. This can be viewed as a legitimacy defence strategy that reinforces rule-based order (L’Etang et al., 2016). The unity discourse of “we take care of the Kingdom” (Ritzau, *DR*, January 6, 2026), presupposes that the Danish-Greenlandic relationship is functional and natural rather than historically asymmetrical. Most significant is Denmark’s self-critical admissions, “we have not been good enough” and “a lack of prioritisation over the last 40 years” (Erdem & Gjerding Nielson, 19 January, 2026), which presuppose long-term Danish responsibility for Greenland, which simultaneously opens space for Greenlandic critique and reinforces Danish authority over the reform process. The power to define both historical failure as well as the path forward remains in Danish hands.

Not all Greenlandic discourse reinforces passivity. Siumut’s demand for renegotiation of the 1951 Defense Agreement with “equal rights” (Munk Veirum, *Sermitsiaq*, 5 March 2026) presupposes Greenlandic entitlement to sovereignty rather than treating it as something to be granted, which shifts the problem definition from dependency to inequality (Fairclough, 2010). Similarly, Pipaluk Lynge’s insistence on being included presupposes the right to be included rather than the expectation of exclusion (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January 2026). These presuppositions construct Greenland as an active political subject rather than a passive recipient, the clearest discursive counter to the American frame of inevitable acquisition and the Danish frame of managed protection.

5.3.4 Normalization as a Discursive Strategy for Issue Management

A clear example of normalization emerges in the discourse Pipaluk Lynge states in *KNR* (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January 2026); “we have to get used to the fact that this is how they speak. They are bombastic”. Such statements reflect a significant shift in problem definition: confrontational rhetoric and threats of acquisition from the United States are no

longer framed as violations of international diplomatic norms, but as expected features of a new geopolitical reality. This contributes to the normalization of a new communicative order, where aggressive discourse is routinely incorporated into everyday political reasoning, effectively lowering the threshold for what is considered an acceptable diplomatic assault. This normalization is further reinforced by the construction of Greenland as a structurally limited actor.

The articulation of external threat by Greenlandic elites can be understood as a strategic response within a crisis-driven discursive context. In strategic communication, maintaining a unified front during an acute crisis is vital for protecting legitimacy and projecting stability. By synchronizing their rhetoric, Greenlandic elites attempt to maximize their limited communicative leverage against asymmetric counter-forces. At the same time, this crisis communication strategy produces broader discursive consequences. By framing external threats as immediate and existential, Greenlandic elites reinforce the perception that postponing sovereignty is a necessary and rational response to geopolitical instability. References to a potential US “takeover” (*Semitsiaq*, 5 March, 2026) contribute to a situation in which the postponement of independence is framed as a necessary and responsible course of action. Describing the suspension of sovereignty as a temporary “pause” (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January, 2026) to ensure survival transforms what could be perceived as restriction of political agency into an expression of collective resilience. In this sense, normalization operates through the repetition of seemingly pragmatic and reasonable statements, which gradually redefine the boundaries of what is considered possible. Through this framing, asymmetrical power relations are not explicitly imposed but become discursively legitimized as necessary. Thus, the very communication strategies intended to secure stability during crisis simultaneously contribute to reproducing the discursive conditions that constrain. The pursuit of independence is thereby repositioned: while it remains a long-term aspiration, its immediate realization is constructed as “unrealistic” or even dangerous under current geopolitical conditions.

Through processes of discursive reproduction and normalization, Greenlandic actors themselves reproduce, legitimize and internalize these dominant discursive constructions (L’etang et al., 2016). By articulating dependency as a form of “realism” local political elites participate in stabilizing the very structures that constrain their agency. Normalization in this context does not eliminate the crisis; it restructures it into a permanent state of affairs where Greenland’s agency is redefined within a constrained discursive field, shaped by externally dominant discourses and internalized logics of survival.

Another central example of normalization can be seen in the repeated emphasis on “working groups”, “red lines” (Honoré, *TV2*, 14 January, 2026) and “dialogue” (Uldall, *DR*, January 13, 2026; Ritzau, *TV2*, 10 January, 2026) following Trump’s threats regarding Greenland. Although Danish officials formally reject the possibility of American ownership, the discourse simultaneously accepts the premise that Greenland’s future must now be negotiated within an intensified geopolitical framework. The problem definition gradually shifts from a violation of sovereignty to a question of strategic crisis management. The focus is thereby no longer primarily on the abnormality of the threat itself, but on how Denmark (and Greenland) should pragmatically respond to it.

This normalization process is also visible in the portraying of Denmark's role within the Kingdom. Statements such as Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s assertion that “We take care of the Kingdom,” (Ritzau, *DR*, January 6, 2026) construct Denmark as the rational guarantor of order, security and stability. This can be understood as a legitimizing discourse that reproduces asymmetrical power relations (Motion & Leitch, 2016) while presenting them as protective and necessary. Danish authority is framed less as political dominance and more as responsible stewardship. Consequently, Greenlandic sovereignty becomes discursively tied to vulnerability, dependence and geopolitical risk.

The Danish media discourse further contributes to the normalization of delayed independence. Several articles frame Greenlandic independence not as an immediate political possibility, but as something that must be postponed due to external security threats. References to NATO obligations (Ritzau, *TV2*, 10 January, 2026; Erdem and Gjerding Nielson, *TV2*, 19 Jan, 2026), Arctic instability, and geopolitical vulnerability (Erdem and Gjerding Nielson, *TV2*, 19 jan, 2026) contribute to constructing independence as potentially unrealistic or even dangerous under current conditions. This is also something explicitly stated by a Danish reporter; “The government and the Parliament (*Folketinget*) will at some point have to say that it’s fine to dream of independence for Greenland, unfortunately, it cannot be done because of the geopolitical situation”, (Erdem & Gjerding Nielson, *TV2*, 19 January, 2026). This reflects the concept of naturalization (Fairclough, 2010), where specific ideological assumptions gradually become accepted as common sense. In this case, the idea that security must take precedence over sovereignty becomes increasingly normalized through repetition and strategic framing. Simultaneously, militarization itself becomes normalized within the discourse.

The Arctic is repeatedly framed as a strategic security zone threatened by Russia and China (Dall, *DR*, January 2, 2026). Although Danish officials reject the American portrayal

of Greenland as overwhelmed by Russian and Chinese influence, Danish media discourse nevertheless contributes to normalizing the security framework initiated by the United States. By increasingly discussing Greenland through the language of NATO obligations, Arctic defence, strategic vulnerability, and military preparedness, the discourse gradually shifts the boundaries of what appears politically reasonable. In this sense, the American threat narrative does not need to be fully accepted in order for its geopolitical consequences to become normalized within Danish public discourse. The discourse also reveals an important dynamic where Greenlandic actors such as Vivian Motzfeldt are frequently granted visibility and direct quotation in Danish media (Honoré, *TV2* 14 January, 2026; Ritzau, *TV2*, 10 January, 2026; Uldall, *DR*, January 13, 2026; Ritzau, *DR*, Jan 6, 2026), which creates the appearance of inclusion and partnership. However, these voices are consistently embedded within Danish and NATO-oriented security frameworks. Greenlandic politicians are often allowed to articulate aspirations for greater autonomy, but only while simultaneously acknowledging the constraints imposed by geopolitical reality, existing legal frameworks, and alliance structures. As a result, Greenlandic agency is partially recognized, yet discursively bounded by the strategic interest and interpretive frames established by Copenhagen and broader Western security discourse.

Taken together, the Danish media material illustrates how normalization functions through moderation, pragmatism, and strategic realism rather than overt direction. Through repeated references to security threats, alliance obligations, dialogue mechanisms, and geopolitical responsibility, the discourse gradually narrows the range of imaginable political futures. Within this discursive environment, militarization, Danish guardianship, and the postponement of Greenlandic independence increasingly appear not as contested political outcomes, but as rational and necessary responses to the crisis.

While Greenlandic and Danish discourses largely focus on stabilizing and managing an already tense geopolitical situation, the U.S. media material reveals a contrasting dynamic: a proactive process of normalization through rupture. This reflects how “unorthodox” or taboo-breaking rhetoric can function as a strategic mechanism to dismantle established normative orders, replacing them with a new reality in which previously unthinkable actions become politically negotiable. Across American media coverage of statements associated with the Trump administration, a clear pattern of normalization through repetition and inevitability emerges. The problem definition is anchored in narratives of Arctic instability and strategic vulnerability, while the treatment recommendation is implicitly tied to stronger

U.S. involvement or control. In this sense, what appears as descriptive reporting also contributes to structuring what kinds of political responses become thinkable.

This process is reinforced through shifting narratives where Trump alternates between positions of reluctant negotiator, “I don’t want to use force” and assertive expansionist “do it the hard way”. This oscillation expands the repertoire of acceptable diplomatic tools, where economic coercion and implied force become normalized as part of negotiation itself.

5.4 Power Asymmetries and Legitimacy Struggles

At the macro level of social practice, the analysis moves from description to explanation and evaluation. Following Fairclough’s formulation of CDA as not merely descriptive, but normative, the concern lies with the social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting them. This section asks which of the competing strategies identified at the micro and meso levels are becoming dominant, which are being implemented in ways that shape actual social transformations, and which are, or are not, likely to advance Greenlandic self-determination and human well-being. The empirical material is examined here not only for what it reveals about language and power, but for what it reveals about the conditions under which Greenlandic agency is structurally possible (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999).

5.4.1 Geopolitical power

American political actors systematically attempt to shift the conditions of possibilities (Foucault, 2003) for what is considered legitimate within the liberal international order. The acquisition of a self-governing territory is framed not as a normal transition, but as a “rupture” (Ataman & Sebastian, January 24, 2026). Yet, through the relentless repetition of acquisition frames across Truth Social and press conferences, the Trump administration attempts to naturalize this geopolitical ambition. This demonstrates how communication can function as a substitute for violent statecraft, gradually normalizing an otherwise illegitimate claim (Ritter, 2025). This ideological work is evident when Trump states that American control of Greenland is an absolute “necessity” and that “anything less is unacceptable” (Steinhauser, *Fox News*, January 21, 2026). Furthermore, this normalization process is further illuminated by the scholarship on the mainstreaming of extreme political positions through media circulation. This demonstrates that extreme positions do not need to be accepted in order to become normalized (Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2022), they only need to become the reference point around which other actors orient their responses, thereby shifting the

boundaries. The empirical material documents this mechanism in action. The *CNN* coverage by Ataman and Sebastian (24 January 2026) captures how European leaders have moved from outright rejection of the US acquisition discourse to calibrating their responses within the frame that Trump has established, what the article terms “Trumpwhispering”. Germany’s Chancellor Merz speaking of being “grateful” for Trump stepping back from confrontation, and Lithuania’s President stating that “the US is still our closest friend” (Atman & Sebastian, *CNN*, January 24, 2026) even while acknowledging the crisis, are not expressions of stable pre-crisis normative framework. They are the responses of actors who have already partially internalized the new terms of the discourse. Moreover, this is normalization (Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2022) in process: the extreme position has not been accepted, but it has become the discursive centre of gravity around which all other actors must now position themselves.

What the empirical material documents, however, is an active and multilateral resistance to this normalization. European leaders function in these as counter-discursive actors working to re-establish the boundaries of legitimate political action. Macron’s characterizations of American tariff threats as “fundamentally unacceptable,” Tusk’s invocation of “appeasement” (Atman & Sebastian, *CNN*, January 24, 2026) as a historical warning, and the EU’s threat to activate its anti-coercion trade instrument all operate at this macro-discursive level. They are not simply policy responses, but attempts to reassert that the existing conditions of possibility remain in force. Most significantly for this study, Greenlandic actors perform the same function as form a position of considerably less structural power. Aqqaluk Lynge’s warning in *Sermitsiaq* of a “slow takeover” (*Sermitsiaq*, 18 February, 2026) and his conditional statement that “if the American midterms are cancelled by the President, we will know that a dictatorship has begun” functions as a discursive alarm, a pre-emptive naming of the process by which conditions of possibility shift before the shift is complete.

The resistance can be understood as a form of legitimacy management under duress; Greenlandic and Danish actors are not simply defending a territorial position, they are defending the discursive framework in which their territorial position can be defended at all. If the acquisition of Greenland becomes thinkable or even plausible, the strategic communication resources available to Nuuk and Copenhagen are fundamentally diminished.

The interplay between the empirical material illustrates a fundamental struggle over hegemonic common sense (Fairclough, 2010). In this context, hegemony is legitimized or challenged through two opposing discursive logics. The U.S. texts attempt to legitimize superpower hegemony by bypassing the need for consent and instead establishing

geopolitical inevitability. When the administration frames the acquisition as an absolute “necessity” (Steinhauser, *Fox News*, 21 January, 2026), it utilizes a presuppositional move. By treating the acquisition as a survival-based requirement rather than a policy choice, the discourse legitimizes the idea that superpower security interests possess an inherent moral and legal priority over the sovereignty of smaller nations. Furthermore, hegemony (Fairclough, 2010) is legitimized through a discourse of paternalistic care. The U.S. narrative regarding the hospital ship (Watkins & Nierenberg, *NYT*, 22 February, 2026) performs a communicative erasure (Dutta, 2016) of Greenland’s existing social structures. By positioning Greenland as a site of medical neglect, the US discourse legitimates its expansionist ambitions as humanitarian benevolence. This shifts the role of the superpower from a “conqueror” to a “provider”, a move designed to make hegemonic control appear not only legitimate but morally required.

Conversely, the Greenlandic and Danish texts challenge this hegemony by reasserting the agency of the subaltern and re-establishing diplomatic boundaries. The joint statement by the Inatsisartut “We do not want to be Americans [...] Kalaallit Nunaat is ours” (*Sermitsiaq*, 8 March, 2026), is a direct counter-hegemonic act. It challenges US transactional logic by re-centering the discourse on indigenous identity, effectively stating that Greenland is a subject of history, not an object of trade. Danish actors support this, Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s insistence on “red lines” and his rejection of ownership as being “out of the question” (Honoré, *TV2*, 14 January, 2026) function as boundary work, re-asserting a law-based order against Trump’s remarkable statements. Despite this resistance, the material reveals a more subtle way in which superpower hegemony is legitimized: through the power of the agenda-setter. Even as Greenlandic and Danish actors successfully challenge the content of the US demands, the fact that they are forced to change their internal behavior suggests that the US has already succeeded in the level of social practice. Hegemony is legitimized when the secondary power (Denmark) adopts the dominant powers premise. The Danish Minister of Defense’s admission that Denmark “has not been good enough” (Erdem & Gjerding Nielson, *TV2*, 19 January, 2026) regarding Arctic security is a profound hegemonic concession. By admitting a 40-year lack of prioritization, Danish discourse accepts the US-imposed reality that the Arctic is no longer a low tension area. Løkke Rasmussen’s observation that even in Trump’s absence, “his spirit hovered in the room” (Honoré, *TV2*, 14 January, 2026) , provides evidence of internalised hegemony. The US does not need to be physically present to dictate the atmosphere, the “win” of the agenda-setter is evidenced by Greenland being forced to “pause” its independence (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January, 2026)

and Danish actors admitting that “it cannot be done [independence] because of the geopolitical situation” (Erdem & Gjerding Nielson, *TV2*, 19 Jan, 2026).

The superpower exercises hegemony by compelling an entire region to redefine its political priorities, security frameworks, and future dreams [independence] in relation to its demands. While Danish and Greenlandic texts successfully depend on the legal framework of sovereignty, they simultaneously document a shift in the psychological and strategic framework. Hegemony is maintained not through a deed to the island, but through the constant manufacture of geopolitical uncertainty, leaving Greenland and Denmark caught in a “strategic retreat” where survival within the Realm becomes a prerequisite for security against the superpower.

5.4.2 Colonial echoes

The social practice dimension of the empirical material reveals that Greenlandic political actors operate within what can be described as a colonial double bind: they are simultaneously navigating the residual power asymmetries of the Danish colonial relationship while resisting the emergence of transactional imperialism of the United States. Crucially, these two pressures do not cancel each other out, they interact in ways that constrain Greenlandic agency precisely at the moment when that agency is most urgently required.

The historical background of this thesis is established through Hermann (2021) and Høegh (2024) is not merely contextual, it is discursively active in the empirical material. When Pipaluk Lynge describes Denmark’s exclusion of Greenlandic representatives from security discussions as “a colonialist approach” in the *KNR* reporting, she is not deploying a metaphor. She is naming a structural continuity between the G-50 commission’s systemic exclusion of Greenlandic voices and the present-day reproduction of that exclusion within the diplomatic machinery of the *Rigsfællesskab*. The “banging in the table” (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January, 2026) serves as a discursive rupture (Fairclough, 2010) that exposes the limits of the “camouflaged colony” (Hermann, 2021). Furthermore this exclusion constitutes a form of communicative erasure (Dutta, 2016), where the subaltern subject is rendered invisible within the structure of power. By naming this a colonialist approach, Lynge actively resisted being erased from the security discourse demanding a transition from being an object of Danish diplomacy to becoming a subject with communicative authority. The statement “banging on the table” (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January, 2026) also reveals that behind the cordiality of joint press conferences lies as really where Greenlandic leaders are still, at times, treated as

“second-class citizens” (ibid.), highlighting a persistent struggle over communicative authority.

The Danish discourse of “unity” and “partnership,” most visibly performed through the joint Frederiksen-Nielsen tour of Berlin and Paris (Kvist Hansen, *DR*, 28 January, 2026) does important ideological work here: it updates the form of relationship while leaving its underlying asymmetry largely intact. Denmark presents Greenland to the world as an equal partner, but as Lynge’s table-banging metaphor reveals, this equality must be actively and repeatedly demanded rather than structurally guaranteed.

This dynamic reproduces what Hermann (2021) identifies as the logic of the “camouflaged colony”; a formation in which colonial power is exercised through the language of benevolence and partnership rather than through explicit domination. The Danish welfare frame, most clearly articulated in Frederiksen’s Instagram post as cited in *The New York Times* (Watkins & Nierenberg, February 22, 2026), “the same approach exists in Greenland” [free healthcare], operates within this logic. By positioning Denmark as the competent provider of Greenlandic welfare, the discourse performs a paternalistic function that mirrors the US hospital ship narrative. In both cases, Greenland is represented as a site of social provision and protection rather than a sovereign political subject. This “paternalistic mirror” ensures that the relational structure of provider and recipient persists, effectively shifting the debate from decolonial sovereignty to the successful administration of a periphery’s needs. Dutta’s (2016) critique of paternalistic communication is thereby highly relevant here, both the Danish welfare frame and the US hospital ship narrative operate by constructing Greenland as a site of lack - a space that requires external intervention to function. This shared logic of “protection” serves to secure what Dutta terms “social license” for external authority, effectively positioning Greenland’s potential independence as a threat to its own well-being. The Danish welfare frame, most clearly articulated in Frederiksen’s Instagram post (Watkins & Nierenberg, *NYT* 2026, February 22) operates through the logic of indirect deterrence. Rather than labeling independence as a threat, the Danish discourse utilizes naturalization (Fairclough, 2010); it presents the current state of affairs (Danish-funded universal healthcare) as the stable reality. By positioning Denmark as the guarantor of Greenlandic welfare, the discourse performs a paternalistic function that mirrors the US hospital ship narrative, albeit in a more subtle, “cordial” form.

Both cases thereby represent Greenland as a site of social provision and protection rather than a sovereign political subject. This hallmark of paternalistic communication, where dominant power justifies its presence not through force, but through the benevolent

administration of the periphery's needs. The underlying message is clear: the current level of welfare is tied to the Danish connection. This creates a discursive dependency, where the social license for continued Danish authority is secured by making the alternative (independence) synonymous with the loss of fundamental human security. In other words both the US and Denmark use "care" as a tool of strategic communication. While the US employs communicative inversion by offering a ship that is not needed. Denmark employs referential stabilization by emphasizing a system that already exists. Ultimately, both narratives reinforce a relational structure of provider and recipient, effectively "pausing" the decolonial project by making Greenland survival appear dependent on external institutional support.

What makes the current geopolitical moment analytically distinctive, however, is the way U.S. pressure transforms this double bind into a strategic resource for Greenlandic actors. The threat of American acquisition forces Denmark into a position where it must publicly perform Greenlandic agency in order to resist the US claim. By bringing Greenlandic Prime Minister, Jens-Frederik Nielsen to meet Merz and Macron (Kvist Hansen, *DR*, 28 January, 2026), Denmark is communicating to Washington that Greenland is a political subject with its own will, which in turn makes an US acquisition legally and morally complex. However, Greenland's agency is "borrowed" by Denmark to create a moral barrier against US expansionism. This instrumentalised agency, while providing Greenland with an international platform, remains precarious, as seen in Lars Løkke Rasmussen's anxiety regarding a "Zelenskyy moment" or a "ritual of humiliation" (Honoré, *TV2*, 14 Jan, 2026). This is a moment where Danish and Greenlandic strategic interests temporarily align, but for different reasons. Denmark uses Greenlandic agency in order to protect the Realm; Greenland uses the platform to establish itself as an international actor. The joint European Tour (Kvist Hansen, *DR*, 28 January, 2026) is therefore not simply evidence of unity between Denmark and Greenland, but a site of competing strategic communications that happen, for now, to produce compatible outputs.

This analysis connects to Gad's (2014) argument that Greenland demonstrates how a non-sovereign policy can expand its international agency without direct confrontation with its former colonial power. However, the current context adds a layer that Gad's earlier work could not anticipate: the presence of a third actor whose openly transactional discourse *makes* the Danish relationship comparatively attractive, regardless of its structural inequalities. This is further complicated by the internalization of colonial logic. When Aqqaluk Lynge (*Sermitsiaq*, 18 February, 2026) asserts that an independent Greenland would constitute a

“power vacuum”, he participates in a naturalization of Greenlandic vulnerability. Within a Faircloughian framework (2010) this shows how hegemony functions by convincing the subaltern that their own dependency is a “natural” geopolitical fact. Pipaluk Lynge’s (*KNR*, n.a., 2026) formulation, “putting things on pause for a bit”, captures this dynamic precisely. Independence is not abandoned; it is deferred strategically within a geopolitical window that makes survival a more pressing communicative objective than sovereignty.

5.4.3 Identity construction

The parliamentary statement that circulates across the Greenlandic empirical material– “We do not want to be Americans, we do not want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders”, functions at the macro level as more than an assertion of national identity. It is a discursive architecture: a construction of sovereign identity through a triple negation that simultaneously rejects the two dominant colonial and neo-colonial frames through which Greenland is externally defined.

Greenlandic identity has historically been constituted in relation to Denmark as the colonial “Other”, with “Greenlandic” and “Danish” constructed as mutually exclusive categories (Gad, 2009). What the current geopolitical crisis produces, however, is an expansion of this oppositional structure. The United States now functions as a second colonial Other against which Greenlandic identity is defined. This paradoxically strengthens the coherence of Greenlandic political identity by providing two points of resistance rather than one. The “we” can be seen as emerging from this triple negation, not merely as an ethnic or cultural category, but as a political subject constituted through its refusals. This identity construction strategy has immediate consequences for the legitimacy claims of external actors. As is made clear by the Greenlandic Deputy Prime Minister, Múte B. Egede, “[...] Greenland belongs to the Greenlanders,” then Greenlandic identity can be seen as defined by its non-Americaness and its non-Danishness, therefore any claim by either Washington or Copenhagen to speak for Greenland becomes inherently self-undermining. The discourse of “unity” (Fairclough, 2010), as is portrayed in the Danish media and political actors with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Greenlandic Head of Government Jens-Frederik Nielsen’s visit to Berlin and Paris, is subtly but significantly challenged by the Greenlandic insistence on a distinct identity that cannot be subsumed under the category of “the Realm”. Similarly, Trump’s acquisition frame is not merely rejected on legal or political grounds, but on the level of the philosophical branch of ontology. You cannot acquire a people who have constituted themselves as irreducibly distinct from the acquiring power.

A central element in the construction of a modern Greenlandic identity is the explicit rejection of a “victim-based” relationship with Greenland. Aqqaq Lyngé performs a significant discursive break by urging the younger generation to stop inheriting “traumas” in his interview with *Sermitsiaq* (18 February, 2026). This should not be seen as a denial of historical colonial hardships, but a strategic refusal to let those hardships define the current political subjectivity of Greenland. By insisting that Greenlanders should stop acting as victims toward Denmark, Lyngé reconfigures the identity of the post-colonial subject. Instead of a relationship based on historical grievance, which inversely positions Denmark as the powerful actor and Greenland as the passive suggested, Lyngé promotes an identity based on gratitude and shared governance. Lyngé notes that “no other place in the world” does an indigenous people govern their own country to this extent. A point of view like this has two major geopolitical consequences for identity construction; Internal Empowerment and Deflecting US Paternalism. By shedding the “victim” label, Greenlandic identity moves from being reactive to proactive. It creates an image of people who are masters of their own language, culture and real opportunities, rather than people waiting for reparations or rescue.

By refusing to be “victims” in relation to Denmark, Greenlandic actors effectively can collapse the American paternalistic narrative. Trump’s hospital ship proposal (Watkins & Nierenberg, *NYT*, 22 February, 2026) relies on framing Greenlanders as a “neglected population” in need of a new protector. However, if Greenlanders define themselves as capable partners with Denmark rather than passive sufferers of Danish rule, they invalidate the US pretext for intervention. The reception of victimhood toward Copenhagen thus functions as a rejection of US paternalism; a people who see themselves as masters of their own “real opportunities” cannot easily be categorized as “sick people” in need of rescue by Washington.

The current crisis has forced a new kind of togetherness within the Kingdom of Denmark, which can be described as pragmatic solidarity. While Greenlandic identity remains unique and distinct, the external threat from the US had triggered a re-negotiation of the “we”. Even one the most vocal advocates for independence, such as Aleqa Hammond, are now emphasizing that Greenland and Denmark “stand closely together” and speak of “unity rather than division” (Uldall, *DR*, January 13, 2026). This is not necessarily a change of heart or a sudden desire for permanent dependency on Denmark, instead it is a complex use of identity as a tool for ontological security.

By choosing to emphasize a united front, Greenlandic politicians are performing a strategic deferral: they are prioritizing the survival of the nation over the immediate goal of

independence. They are constructing an identity that is “Greenlandic first”, but “Danish-aligned” for survival. This is a form of pragmatic resilience; they choose the stable, legal framework of the Realm, a partner they know how to navigate, to avoid being “bound hand and foot by the USA” (*Sermitsiaq*, February 18, 2026). In this sense, standing with Denmark is the only viable way to protect the “conditions of possibility” (Foucault, 1984) for a future independent Greenland.

Identity construction in these texts is therefore likely a deliberate strategic choice. Aqqaluk Lynge’s discourse (Fairclough, 2010) suggests that the path to true sovereignty does not lie in staying trapped in historical grievance, but in mastering the tools that provide power today. By framing Greenlanders as “responsible actors” within NATO and international law (*KNR*, Jan 20, 2026), they ensure the world views them as a diplomatic subject (an actor with a voice) rather than a strategic object (a piece of real estate). This identity becomes the ultimate barrier, while a superpower may have the military strength to occupy a territory, it lacks the discursive power to take over people who have so clearly defined their own “we” by rejecting an American “rescue mission” in favor of a calculated partnership with the Realm.

5.4.4 Legitimacy

The American acquisition discourse constitutes a breach of the established rules of the international order, in the most direct sense. As is showcased in the *CNN*’s coverage (Atman & Sebastian, 24 January, 2026, Trump repeated assertions that the US will have Greenland “one way or the other” and will “do it the hard way” if necessary violate the foundational norms within which the Greenlandic sovereignty is locally recognized: the 2009 Self-Government Act, UN frameworks for self-determination, and the basic principles that sovereign nations cannot be acquired by force or coercion in peacetime. Following Fairclough (2010) (and Beetham), a breach of rules of this kind does not merely produce political conflict, it produces illegitimacy.

The American acquisition discourse is therefore not simply unprecedented within the transatlantic alliance, but aggressive in tone and structurally illegitimate in its premises. Consequently, both European and Greenlandic actors consistently highlight this illegitimacy in their communicative responses. European leaders frame their responses explicitly in terms of violated norms and rules; Macron’s characterization of American tariff threats as “fundamentally unacceptable”, Tusk’s invocation of “appeasement” (Ataman & Sebastian, *CNN*, 24 January, 2026) as a historical warning against submission to rule breaking powers, and the EU’s activation of its anti-coercion trade instrument all construct the U.S.

administration as an illegitimate actor within the established international framework.. The American legitimization strategy can thus be understood as an attempt to manufacture consent through strategic power projection rather than to earn legitimacy through conformity to established rules (Macnamara, 2016).

This manufacturing of acceptance is further evident when the U.S. administration frames the acquisition as an “absolute necessity” and states that “anything else is unacceptable” (Steinhauser, *Fox News*, 21 January 2026). This discursive strategy attempts to establish geopolitical inevitability, bypassing the requirement for democratic consent. Legitimate power, however, requires genuine consent grounded in shared values, not compliance produced through rhetorical coercion (Fairclough, 2010). In direct opposition to this, the principle that “the fate of the massive northern island must be decided by its people and Denmark” is invoked by international observers to reinforce the rules of self-determination (Smialek, *NYT*, 18 January, 2026). The consistent European invocation of the rules based order can be understood as a legitimacy defence strategy: by repeatedly naming the breach, these actors work to prevent the naturalization of the violation.

Where the U.S. discourse produces illegitimacy through a breach of rules, the Danish discourse reveals a more complex condition: a legitimacy deficit produced by the discrepancy between the formal rules of the *Rigsfællesskab* and the beliefs that would need to underpin them. The Self-Government Act formally recognizes Greenland as a distinct people under international law with an inherent right to self-determination. Formally, the rules are sound. However, the underlying beliefs required to fully legitimize those rules, that Denmark and Greenland are genuine equals, and that the relationship is an authentic partnership rather than a camouflaged dependency, are not structurally sustained. Fairclough (2010) identifies precisely this friction between formal legal validity and a lack of shared, internalized beliefs as a source or a legitimacy deficit.

The empirical material makes this deficit visible. Pipaluk Lynge’s account of being excluded from security discussions at Christiansborg (the Danish Parliament), and her description of this exclusion as “a colonialist approach” in which Greenlandic representatives are “treated like second-class citizens,” exposes the gap between what the rules formally promise and what the relationship actually delivers (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January 2026). While the formal rule positions Greenland as an autonomous partner; the social practice forces Greenlandic leaders to “bang on the table” (ibid.) to obtain basic information about decisions that directly concern its own future. This discursive rupture disrupts the

naturalization (Fairclough, 2010) of Danish administrative authority, exposing what has been treated as institutional common sense as asymmetrical power arrangement.

The Danish political establishment attempts to address this deficit through a communicative repair strategy, visible in Mette Frederiksen and Jens-Frederik Nielsen's joint European tour, which performs Danish-Greenlandic equality for an international audience (Kvist Hansen, *DR*, 28 January 2026). Similarly, admissions in Danish media indicate that Denmark “has not been good enough” regarding Greenlandic security function as an acknowledgement of this operational gap. By confessing to this lack of prioritization, the Danish discourse attempts to restore the shared beliefs necessary to close the legitimacy deficit. However, this repair strategy inherently reproduces the asymmetry it seeks to heal: the authority to diagnose the failure and dictate the path toward repair remains concentrated in Copenhagen.

When the subordinate actor actively withdraws consent from a power relation, the result is delegitimation (Beetham cited in Fairclough, 2010). Greenland's lack of military power and economic capacity to enforce its sovereignty against other actors, strategic communication becomes the primary mechanism through which its sovereign subject position is performed and maintained.

The withdrawal of consent is articulated most directly in the parliamentary consensus circulating through material : “We do not want to be Americans, we do not want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders” (Ritzau, *TV2*, 10 January 2026). This constitutes an explicit act of delegitimation; it simultaneously rejects the American transactional acquisition frame and the Danish “unity” frame that limits Greenlandic agency to confines of the Realm. Múte B. Egede's declaration of “Greenland belongs to Greenlanders” (Ritzau, *TV2*, 7 January 2026) performs an identical function, refusing to participate in the transactional terms established by Washington.

This delegitimation strategy is further elaborated through Siumut's (Greenlandic Social Democrats) demand for renegotiation of the 1951 Defense Agreement “in a way where our country has equal rights” (Munk Veirum, *Sermitsiaq*, 5 March 2026). Crucially, this resistance demonstrates that Greenlandic actors merely as passive subjects trapped in an asymmetrical security deadlock oversimplifies the dialectal nature of discourse. The empirical material demonstrates that Greenlandic political actors exhibit significant agency strategically leveraging the intensified U.S. interests as a pragmatic geopolitical counterweight against Denmark. Rather than succumbing to external pressure, political

entities like Siumut and Inatsisartut politicians utilize the crisis to demand structural concessions from Copenhagen. For instance, following the shockwave of U.S pressure, the Siumut election program directly weaponizes the situation by demanding that the bilateral defense agreement with the US be renegotiated to ensure “equal rights” and local “economic spin-off effects” (*Sermitsiaq*, March 5, 2026) . Siumut uses the heightened security threat to legitimize domestic security expansions, proposing the establishment of a local Home Guard and a specialized border mentoring corps, “Kalaallit Rangers” (*Sermitsiaq*, March 5, 2026). Furthermore, as highlighted by the Central Bank's 2025 annual report (*Sermitsiaq*, March 7, 2026). Greenlandic institutions actively frame the interest from other external actors, such as the EU, as a catalyst for infrastructure and raw material investments. This strategic diversification functions as an institutional mechanism to reduce dependency on both Washington and Copenhagen, transforming a geopolitical threat into a platform for institutional robustness and expanded functional autonomy.

Taken together, the three legitimacy conditions identified by Fairclough (2010) reveal the 2026 geopolitical crisis as a legitimacy crisis in a theoretical sense. The U.S. discourse breaches established international rules, thereby producing structural illegitimacy. The Danish discourse reveals a persistent legitimacy deficit between its constitutional framework and its asymmetrical social practices. The Greenlandic discourse performs a withdrawal of consent that delegitimizes both external power relations simultaneously. In answering Fairclough’s (2010) normative question regarding which discursive strategies advance human well-being, Greenlandic delegitimation emerges as the most significant move in the crisis. It refuses to naturalize historical inequalities. By withdrawing consent publicly and communicatively, Greenlandic actors shift the conditions of possibility, insisting that a people's right to self-determination cannot be overridden by superpower necessity or colonial convenience.

5.4.5 Absences

The ideological weight of a text is often found in its silences—the “absences” that prevent alternative realities from being articulated. Within the analyzed material, these absences function as systematic communicative erasure (Dutta, 2016), stripping Greenland of its institutional, historical, and human dimensions. A primary absence in American discourse is the recognition of Greenland’s democratically elected Parliament (*Inatsisartut*) and its post-colonial status. By appointing domestic officials like Governor Jeff Landry as a “special envoy” (Dall, *DR*, 4 January, 2026), the Trump administration effectively bypasses the

sovereign institutions of Greenland. This is an international operationalization of a strategic imaginary that treats Greenland as a blank space for acquisition rather than a governed nation (Motion and Leitch, 2016). Furthermore the complete absence of Greenland's colonial history in statements by Trump prevents a moral evaluation of the situation that respects indigenous rights, simplifying the narrative into a purely transactional exchange between superpowers.

While the Arctic is heavily discussed as a military zone or a “strategic vacuum”, there is a profound absence of the existential climate crisis and its impact on Inuit communities and traditional ways of life. The discourse is dominated by security oriented representations in which Greenland is constructed as a strategically valuable territory within broader US geopolitical interests and “national security” (Steinhauser, *Fox News*, 21 January 2026; Ritzau, *DR*, January 6, 2026). This logic is further echoed even within economic assessments; echoed even within economic assessments; by Grønlandsbanken (The Bank of Greenland) Grønlandsbanken (The Bank of Greenland), notes that “international interest is driven by Greenland's strategic location, security policy significance, and access to critical resources” (Sermitsiaq, March 7, 2026). This reflects a discursive prioritization (Motion & Leitch, 2016) in which military and geopolitical concerns are elevated above social, environmental, and cultural forms of security. Consequently, issues that may be more immediate to Greenlandic communities, such as climate change, environmental degradation, cultural preservation, and the long-term sustainability of Inuit livelihoods, become marginalized or rendered secondary within the dominant geopolitical discourse. Greenland is thereby primarily understood through the strategic interests of external powers rather than through the lived realities of the local population, naturalizing a military industrial logic where dominant actors define the “problem” exclusively in terms of territorial control.

The structural dimension of this struggle is further illustrated by the unequal distribution of discursive power, where states with greater institutional resources enjoy disproportionate media visibility and interpretive authority (Dolea, 2016), contributing to assumptions of “developed world moral superiority” (Dutta, 2016). Within this hierarchy, western states are constructed as rational, credible, and legitimate actors, while smaller or Greenlandic political actors are positioned as politically dependent, or lacking capacity. The deployment of the hospital ship narrative by Trump (Watkins & Nierenberg, *NYT*, 22 Feb, 2026) serves as an example of this dynamic. By claiming that a US Navy ship was (Watkins & Nierenberg, *NYT*, 22 Feb, 2026) to take care of “sick people” who are not being taken care of, the US discourse creates a specific, calculated absence: the existing, functional Greenlandic and Danish universal healthcare systems. This communicative inversion (Dutta,

2016) ignores the reality of universal healthcare in the region to justify intervention as a moral necessity. The silence regarding Greenland's own institutional capacity allows the US to frame its expansionist goals as benevolence. The dynamic highlights the legitimacy deficit Greenland faces; because the US possesses disproportionate discursive power, it can project a "failed state" narrative into Greenland, forcing Greenlandic actors to "work harder" to re-establish their own institutional reality against a fabricated crisis.

This uneven distribution of communicative access shapes not only who gets to speak, but whose interpretations are recognized as authoritative. The dynamic is visible throughout the sourcing patterns of American media, where Greenlandic voices are largely absent, and in Danish media, where Greenlandic perspectives are frequently mediated through journalists, experts, or Danish political actors. Consequently, Greenland faces a communicative legitimacy deficit, where its claims to sovereignty and self-determination do not carry the same naturalized authority as those articulated by the US or Denmark. This also reflects how access to the global "speaking stage" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) remains structurally unequal. Across with military, economic, and institutional power are guaranteed greater capacity to define geopolitical reality, while marginalized actors must continuously justify and legitimize their political aspirations within an externally structured discourse. As Pipaluk Lyngé (Greve Møller, *KNR*, 20 January, 2026) explicitly argues, excluding Greenlandic representatives from negotiations reflects a "colonialist approach" that treats Greenlanders as "second-class citizens". In this sense, the colonialist dynamic operates not only through territorial relations, but also through communicative exclusion, reducing a sovereign political subject to an object of strategic management.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the negotiation of Greenlandic sovereignty and identity is not merely a legal or territorial matter, but a profound struggle over discursive legitimacy. For structurally constrained actors, communication is not a tool deployed alongside other forms of power, it is the primary mechanism where political existence is asserted, legitimacy is claimed, and sovereignty produced. The findings position the thesis within a growing body of strategic communication scholarship that examines communication not as a tool organizations deploy but as the constitutive process in which political identity, legitimacy, and agency are produced. This is particularly relevant for actors whose structural constraints make communication their primary resource for asserting sovereignty (Falkheimer & Heide, 2022; Hallahan et al., 2017).

The analysis reveals that while Greenland possesses formal self-government, it remains subject to what may be termed “invisible colonialism”. A form of power that operates not through physical occupation, but through control of narrative and the conditions of possibility. The American discourse consistently constructs Greenland as a “blank space” or “strategic vacuum”, by ignoring Greenland's democratic institutions, such as the Inatsisartut, and appointing domestic envoys to manage Arctic affairs, the U.S. administration effectively objectifies the nation. The metaphor of the hospital boat illustrates this clearly: it is constructed to function differently for each audience, it allows Trump to maintain plausible deniability while the geopolitical message remains legible to its intended recipients (Jönsson & Hall, 2003). As a result, these discursive constructions actively reinforce a hierarchical geopolitical order where great powers are positioned as legitimate actors, while smaller nations are passive objects of strategic management. This suggests that sovereignty is being negotiated in a field where Greenlandic actors must fight for epistemic authority. The negotiation of national identity thus becomes a struggle against being “written out” of one’s own geography. Even within the Danish “Unity of the Realm”, the paternalistic framing of welfare and protection mirrors this objectification, suggesting that Greenlandic sovereignty is still discursively bounded by external guardians who claim the right to define Greenland’s “best interests”.

A central finding in this research is the acute communicative asymmetry between superpowers and small nations. The empirical material demonstrates Greenlandic actors must “work harder” to establish their institutional reality. While the U.S. can set global agendas through such as the hospital ship narrative, Greenlandic actors are forced into a reactive

position. This creates a legitimacy deficit where Greenlandic representatives must expend significant communicative resources simply to refute false premises or to “bang on the table” for inclusion in security dialogues. The negotiation of sovereignty is therefore hindered by an unequal distribution of discursive power. This asymmetry confirms that national identity is not only negotiated through what is being said, but through the struggle to overcome the communicative erasure that characterizes dominant Western media sourcing patterns.

The findings highlight a disconnect between the geopolitical agenda and the lived realities of the Greenlandic population, whose voices are not heard in the news media. While the U.S. and Danish discourses are centred around a military logic focusing on territorial defense and “National security” there is a systematic absence of the existential issues that define life in Greenland, such as the climate crisis and the preservation of Inuit traditional livelihoods. This suggests that the public discourse has been dominated by external security interests, effectively rendering the most pressing local concerns invisible. For Greenlandic actors, negotiating sovereignty in this context is not a matter of choosing between political options, but a struggle to reclaim the agenda itself from a framework that treats their home as a strategic chessboard rather than a living environment. These findings contribute directly to strategic communication scholarship on legitimacy construction under asymmetrical conditions. Legitimacy is not a property that organizations possess, but a relational achievement produced through sustained strategic communication. By consistently deploying identity markers, refusing competing frames, and building communicative infrastructure, an actor can reach the audiences whose recognition matters. This extends the field’s understanding of legitimacy beyond reputation management and crisis communication, and toward what might be called sovereignty communication: the strategic communicative work required when the very right to exist is under contestation.

Another critical finding of this study is that geopolitical power is not only exercised through the achievement of specific policy goals, but through the ability to define the boundaries of the thinkable. The discourse surrounding the “acquisition” of Greenland serves as a prime example of how a superpower can shift the conditions of possibility without securing a formal victory. By forcing all other actors- the EU, NATO, Denmark, and the Greenlandic government, to mobilize vast communicative resources to respond to these claims, the Trump administration successfully integrated its ambitions into the global geopolitical imaginary. Even when the response was one of resistance, it occurred within the discursive framework established by the Trump administration. This suggests that the ultimate power of the superpower in this context is the power of the agenda setter: the ability

to transform a diplomatic taboo into a persistent geopolitical uncertainty. The decision to “pause” Greenlandic independence illustrates this clearly, once the unthinkable is framed as a necessity, it becomes a lingering reality in international relations.

The findings of this study also resonate with the debates within organizational communication, particularly regarding the relationship between voice, silence, and the communicative power. Falkheimer and Heide (2023) identify organizational silence as arising in conditions where the communicative environment systematically prevents certain voices from being heard, not through explicit censorship but through structural conditions that make participation feel impossible. The sourcing patterns in this study reveal an analogous structural silence at the geopolitical level: the systematic absence of Greenlandic voices from international media is produced not by deliberate exclusion, but by the unequal distribution of institutional access and communicative infrastructure that determines whose voices can enter the discursive field at all. This connects to a fundamental principle of crisis communication: an actor must fill the informational void rapidly, because if it does not, other actors will fill it instead, and narrative control is lost (Falkheimer & Heide, 2023). The empirical material documents this precisely: the American acquisition discourse filled the informational void about Greenland in international media before Greenlandic political institutions had the structural access to do so, on their own terms. The strategic communication lesson to be learned is transferable: for any actor that is structurally constrained, building a communicative infrastructure (i.e., diplomatic representations, media relationships, digital platforms) is not a secondary concern, but a prerequisite for ensuring control of the narrative, and for legitimacy itself.

While this analysis is empirically grounded in a specific geopolitical crisis, the discursive mechanism identified across the American, Danish, and Greenlandic texts offer significant insights for the broader field of strategic communication, corporate PR, and crisis management. The “naming struggles”, “narrative tactics”, and structural asymmetries observed in this Arctic triangle are not unique to state actors; rather, they reflect universal communicative dynamics that govern how organizations compete for symbolic power and legitimacy within the global arena.

Three transferable principles emerge from the analysis, each with direct relevance to strategic communication. First, the US deployment of a paternalistic metaphor (the hospital ship) to construct Greenland as a site of humanitarian deficiency illustrates a fundamental principle of strategic issue management: the actor who successfully defines the problem controls the legitimacy of the solution. This is the agenda-setting function of strategic

communication at its most crucial: by defining the problem as Greenlandic neglect rather than American imperial ambition, the US discourse makes its own intervention appear not as a choice but as a necessity. For corporations and non-governmental organizations alike, driving market transformation or navigating a crisis requires more than presenting objective data. As this analysis demonstrates, strategic actors must actively manage the “conditions of possibility” (Foucault, 1984) by sharpening the discursive construction of their operating environment. When an organization successfully construed by external critics as deficient or passive, it compromises its strategic agency, making hostile interventions or regulatory takeovers appear necessary and self-evident to the public.

Second, the analysis demonstrates that naming and reference are never neutral choices, but powerful tools for discursive positioning. In the corporate world, the words an organization uses to define its environment establish its legal and moral boundaries. A digital logistic company might avoid the term “employees” and instead refer to its drivers as “independent partners”. This is a deliberate discursive strategy designed to shift financial and ethical liabilities away from the corporation, naturalizing an asymmetrical business model just as the US framed Greenland as a “strategic island”. When an organization's social license to operate is challenged by critics launching counter-labels like “exploited labour”, its survival depends on executing a discursive rupture. Instead of defensively validating the opponent's narrative, the organization must actively reject these external labels and re-establish autonomous, value-driven identity markers, reframing the debate around “individual freedom and flexibility, to reconfigure the very conditions under which a business model is regarded as legitimate.

Third, the asymmetrical distribution of agency identified in the empirical material highlights the danger of communicative dependency for structurally weaker actors. Greenland’s struggle to avoid being reduced to a reactive respondent within a dominant, externally mediated narrative is a dynamic frequently mirrored in corporate crises or hostile takeovers. Consider a small, innovative tech company, facing an aggressive takeover bid by a large investment firm. If the acquiring firm frames the smaller company in media as “vulnerable and lacking global scale”, the smaller company falls into a communicative trap if it merely responds defensively by arguing that it is not weak. By doing so, it validates the opponent’s narrative and accepts the opponent’s rules of engagement, producing a discursive erasure. To counter this, structurally constrained actors cannot rely on the assumption that “facts speak for themselves”. Instead, they must proactively cultivate independent communicative platforms. They must employ moral evaluations to shift the conflict entirely,

moving the debate away from the opponent's frame and anchoring it in the organization's intrinsic dignity, independence, and core values. In critical strategic communication, power is not merely the ability to win an argument, but the structural capacity to dictate the parameters of the debate itself. The empirical material reveals a significant communicative paradox: when structurally constrained actors engage in defensive rhetoric- explicitly countering external narratives by asserting “we cannot be bought”, they respond directly to the terms set by a dominant actor, sustaining the opponent's agenda, transaction and real estate, rather than on Greenlandic autonomy. True counter-hegemonic resistance does not lie in refuting the dominant discourse, but in breaking away from it entirely. Constrained, actors must bypass reactive framing and instead deploy proactive, independent identity markers. By shifting towards their own chosen narratives, indigenous governance, legal responsibility, and international partnership, constrained actors can reclaim agenda-setting power, demonstrating that controlling what is discussed is the ultimate form of communicative currency in contemporary strategic communication.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that for structurally constrained actors, strategic communication is not a support function but the primary mechanism where political existence is asserted and defended. This aligns with Falkheimer and Heide (2023) critique of the traditional “transmission view” of communication, where communication is reduced to the distribution of information from sender to receiver. Instead, the findings of this thesis demonstrate that communication functions as a constitutive force where legitimacy, sovereignty, and political agency are continuously produced and defended. For actors operating under asymmetrical power conditions, communication cannot be understood solely as operational support to political action, but as the strategic infrastructure that enables political existence itself. Legitimacy, agency, and sovereignty are not static assets possessed by an organization, they are continuously co-produced, contested, and naturalized through discourse. The contribution of this thesis of the field of strategic communication is threefold: that agenda-setting is the deepest form of communicative power and resisting it requires independent discursive terrain rather than better counterarguments; that structural silence is a condition produced by unequal communicative infrastructure rather than by lack of voice; and that the most effective communicative act available to a constrained actor is the consistently asserting independent identity markers that redirect the discourse rather than engaging with the dominant frame on its own terms. These insights are relevant wherever strategic communication operates under conditions of asymmetrical power, which, as this thesis demonstrates, is not the exception but the rule.

7. Conclusion

The study set out to investigate how Greenlandic political actors negotiate national identity and sovereignty in response to intensifying US-Danish security discourses. The answer the empirical material provided is clear and consequential: Greenlandic political actors negotiate sovereignty primarily through the communicative construction of legitimacy, by publicly and collectively withdrawing consent from the American acquisition frame and aspects of the Danish administrative framework. This asserts a distinct political identity that cannot be incorporated by either external power, and insists on genuine equality as the only acceptable condition for any legitimate power relation. In the absence of military or economic resources, communication is not merely how Greenland expresses its political position, but it is the mechanism through which their position is produced, sustained, and defended.

The 2026 Greenlandic crisis is fundamentally a legitimacy crisis. The American acquisition discourse breaches the established rules of international order, producing illegitimacy regardless of its rhetorical force. The Danish discourse reveals a persistent gap between its formal commitments to Greenlandic autonomy and the reality of the relationship. And the Greenlandic discourse performs a withdrawal of consent from both powers simultaneously, through parliamentary declarations, social media, and demands for equal treatment. The most strategically significant finding is that the actor who controls what is talked about holds the greatest power, irrespective of factual accuracy or moral legitimacy. Trump's acquisition discourse does not derive its power from legal validity, but from its capacity to make acquisition the unavoidable topic, and forcing the other actors to respond to his frame. The most effective communicative acts are therefore not the moments of counterargument but the moments of refusal: "we do not want to be Americans, we do not want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders" does not engage with the American frame, but instead replaces it.

Moreover, international media, particularly American outlets, function as structural gatekeepers that systematically exclude Greenlandic voices in order to amplify Western ones. Greenland is spoken about rather than heard. This is not a representational imbalance but a power condition, as it determines whose legitimacy claims reach the international audiences, and whose do not. The assumption of Western moral superiority is reproduced not through argument but through the structural absence of Greenlandic self-representation in the outlets that shape international opinion.

The American hospital boat narrative is analytically significant not as a policy proposal, but as a discursive strategy. It constructs a crisis of neglect in a territory with universal free healthcare in order to fabricate the justification for intervention. The fabricated crisis does not need to be believed, it only needs to become the reference point around which others must respond, thereby terrain on which sovereignty is defended.

7.1 Limitations

A key limitation of this study stems from the boundaries of the chosen methodology. While Fairclough's framework encompasses text, production, and consumption, this primarily focuses on textual representation and the strategic production of discourse by media. Consequently, it cannot account for audience reaction or how the public actively consumes, interests, or potentially resist these dominant frames in their everyday life. Although the research team possessed the native linguistic competence to fully analyze the extensive Danish-language material and Danish editions of Greenlandic media, the study remains limited by the exclusion of Kalaallisut (the Greenlandic language). Because the authors do not speak Kalaallisut, localized nuances, cultural idioms, or grassroots discourse published exclusively in the indigenous language could not be accessed. Within a critical postcolonial framework, this creates a necessary limitation where the analysis of the "subaltern voice" is partly construed by analysing it through the linguistic frameworks of the former colonial power (Danish) and the global hegemon (English). However, the selected Greenlandic media outlets are available in both Danish and Greenlandic on their respective websites. This significantly mitigated the issue, as both linguistic versions are produced on-site by same Greenlandic journalists, and both languages coexist directly on the news platforms.

Another notable limitation is its empirical focus on established, high profile media outlets. The sample consist primarily of national public service broadcasters (e.g., KNR & DR) and major global news corporations (e.g. The New York Times & Fox News). While analyzing these prominent institutions is highly effective for uncovering dominant, hegemonic discourses and elite "perceptions", it simultaneously excludes alternative, independent, grassroots publications. Consequently this finding primarily reflects how institutionalized power structures and political elites shape the geopolitical narrative, potentially overlooking counter-hegemonic frameworks or localized resistance operating within non-mainstream media spaces. Furthermore, this study offers a temporal "snapshot" of a highly volatile and ongoing geopolitical crisis spanning 2025 and 2026. Because the strategic struggle over Greenland's autonomy is still unfolding, the discourses captured in this

material are inherently fluid. The findings reflect the immediate ideological strategies mobilized during this specific period of tension, meaning that the long-term stabilization or transformation of these discourses cannot be definitely determined within the scope of this thesis.

7.2 Future research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several avenues for future research are proposed to further expand the critical understanding of the Arctic geopolitics and CPR. This thesis captures a highly specific and volatile geopolitical moment surrounding Greenland 2025-2026. Future studies could employ a longitudinal design to examine how these strategic imaginaries evolve over time. Specifically, it would be valuable to analyze whether the US "national security" narrative and subsequent naturalization of Greenland as a strategic asset permanently shifts the conditions of possibility for Greenlandic autonomy, or if a return to diplomacy centered on climate and environmental cooperation emerges.

While this study focuses on the production and textual representation of discourse, it does not investigate how these narratives are actually consumed and interpreted by the public. Further research should explore the discursive practice from the consumption side, for instance, through audience reception studies or focus groups within Greenland. This would clarify where local populations internalize the dominant media frames of vulnerability and pragmatic constraint, or if they actively resist them through counter-hegemonic interpretations.

Finally, future research could expand the scope of CPR by conducting comparative analyses of other Arctic territories facing similar postcolonial or neoliberal pressures (e.g., Nunavut in Canada or the indigenous Sámi contexts in Sápmi/Scandinavia). Investigating how different subaltern and indigenous voices utilize strategic communication to negotiate sovereignty against major powers would significantly enrich the positional framework within CPR scholarship.

Appendix

Table A: Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework Analysis Level (Fairclough, CDA and L'Etang et al., CPR)		
	Theoretical Tools	Practical application in the analysis
Micro: Textual Dimension, 5.2	Naming and reference, predication, agency, metaphors, naturalization	Analyzing how linguistic choices construct Greenland as either a sovereign political subject or a passive geopolitical object. Examining naming practices, predications, metaphors, and agency structures that position actors as active decision-makers or passive recipients. Investigating how language naturalizes geopolitical hierarchies, legitimizes intervention, and shapes perceptions of sovereignty, dependency, and authority.
Meso: Discursive Practice, 5.3	Intertextuality, sourcing, presuppositions, normalization	Analyzing how media reproduce and circulate elite geopolitical narratives through sourcing practices and intertextual references. Examining which actors are positioned as legitimate interpreters of Greenland and which voices are marginalized. Investigating how security, dependency, sovereignty, and geopolitical crisis are framed, normalized, and strategically legitimized through media discourse.
Macro: Social Practice, 5.4	CPR	Analyzing broad shifts in

Theoretical framework		
Analysis Level (Fairclough, CDA and L'Etang et al., CPR)		
		power and legitimacy. Examining how Greenlandic actors challenge colonial structures and how previously “unthinkable” geopolitical positions become normalized.

Table B: Overview table of empirical material

**Where no author was available (“n.a.”), the source is referenced by the publishing media organization.*

Outlet	Author	Editorial stance	Date	Primary frame	Quotes
US Media	Author				
New York Times	Watkins & Nierenberg	Centre-left. Largest US broadsheet. Global elite readership. Editorially independent, liberal-leaning.	22 Feb 2026	Humanitarian /hospital boat Discussion regarding free healthcare Denmark's rejection of hospital boat	“massive and crucially strategic island” “no need for special health care efforts” “great hospital boat” “the same approach exists in Greenland” “on the way”
New York Times	Smialek	As above.	18 Jan 2026	Trade war /European response U.S. tariff threats and relation to Europe	“more aggressive posture” “The island” “real war” “pressure campaign” “taboo-shattering behaviour” “the fate of the massive northern island must be decided by its people and by Denmark”
CNN	Ataman & Sebastian	Centrist-liberal. Major US cable network. Global digital reach. Critical of the Trump administration.	24 Jan 2026	Transatlantic rupture /naturalization Strained Transatlantic ties	“Bullies” “Cordial and respectful” “Strategic partners” “Brash assaults” “Whether you like it or not” and “One way or the other, we’re going to have Greenland [...] even if we do it the hard way”

					“The island” “threats of invasion”, “tariff threats” “I don’t want to use force” “we’re going to have Greenland the hard way” “Rupture” “Germany’s Chancellor Friedrich Merz spoke of being grateful for Trump’s change of heart” “Cooperation should be the keyword instead of confrontation, Lithuania’s President Gitanas Nausėda told journalists. The US is still our closest friend.” “fundamentally unacceptable” “appeasement”
Fox News	Steinhauser	Right-leaning. Largest US cable news network. Pro-Trump editorial line. Broad conservative reach.	21 Jan 2026	Acquisition /polling opposition Little support in polls of U.S. acquisition of Greenland	“make Greenland a part of the United States” “You will find out” “No going back” “Acquisition” “The island” “the United States needs Greenland for the purpose of national security” “anything less is unacceptable” “necessity”
Danish Media	Article topic				

DR (Kvist Hansen)	Kvist Hansen	Public service. Editorially independent by charter. Most trusted news source in Denmark. Centrist.	28 Jan 2026	Unity of Realm /European tour A united realm: Frederiksen-Nielsen tour	“unified Realm” “has been welded together” “Russia and China” [in the Arctic]
DR	DR Ritzau	As above.	6 Jan 2026	Denmark objects to U.S. statements, claiming they have the wrong picture.	“we take care of the Kingdom” “do not serve the Kingdom’s interests” “We demand respect” “an incorrect picture is being painted from the American side” “a misreading of what is up and what is down” “Vivian Motzfeldt” “US President Donald Trump repeated his desire to gain control of Greenland for the sake of US national security”
DR	Uldall	As above.	13 Jan 2026	Unity within the Kingdom	“we are not for sale” “Vivian Motzfeldt” “Dialogue” “stand closely together” “unity rather than division”
DR	Dall	As above.	2 January 2026	Geopolitical tension	“surrounded by Russian and Chinese ships” “special envoy” Governor Jeff Landry
DR	Ritzau	Public service. Partially commercially funded. Centrist. Broad national reach across all demographics.	28 Jan 2026	Small nations /solidarity frame King Frederik Lithuania	“In a time of increased uncertainty in Europe, the strength

					of small nations lies in standing together. This was the message from King Frederik in a speech Wednesday evening to the Lithuanian President, Gitanas Nausėda, during a gala dinner held in connection with the royal couple's state visit to the country"
TV2	Ritzau	As above.	7 Jan 2026	Sovereignty /"not for sale" Múte B. Egede Facebook statement	"Greenland is not for sale" "Greenland belongs to Greenlanders" "Múte B. Egede"
TV2	Erdem & Gjerding Nielson	As above.	19 Jan 2026	Danish responsibility	"cannot be done because of the geopolitical situation" "we have not been good enough" "a lack of prioritisation over the last 40 years" "NATO"
TV2	Honoré	As above.	14 Jan 2026	Diplomatic tension and fears of geopolitical humiliation	"ritual of humiliation similar to what was seen with Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in February last year" "red lines" "ownership of Greenland is out of the question" "working groups" "Vivian Motzfeldt"

					“his spirit hovered in the room” “Zelenskyy moment”
TV2	Ritzau	As above.	10 Jan 2026	Inatsisartut rejects American and Danish control	“We do not want to be Americans, we do not want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders” “we stand together” “Dialogue” “NATO” “Vivian Motzfeldt”
Greenlandic Media	Article topic				
KNR	Greve Møller	Public service. Primary Greenlandic-language broadcaster. Pro-autonomy editorial culture.	20 Jan 2026	Sovereignty resistance /NATO shield Pipaluk Lynge interview	“on pause for a bit [...] because we must put all our energy into ensuring we do not become part of the USA” “it is a colonialist approach when we are treated like second-class citizens” “we have to get used to the fact that this is how they speak. They are bombastic” “banging on the table”
Sermitsiaq	n.a.	Greenland's oldest and most established newspaper. Privately owned but deeply rooted in Greenlandic political culture. Editorially centrist	18 Feb 2026	Realist constraint /stay with Denmark Aqqaluk Lynge interview	“we are only 57,000 people” “madman” “if the American midterms are cancelled by the

		within the Greenlandic context, giving space to a wide range of political voices including both independence advocates and pragmatic realists. Primarily Greenlandic-language readership.			President, we will know that a dictatorship has begun in the USA, and then there will be no turning back for Greenland” “An independent Greenland is synonymous with a power vacuum in the Arctic, and that is something the USA cannot accept. Therefore, the only way forward for Greenland is to stand clearly and firmly with Denmark” “slow takeover” “Unity of the Realm” “power vacuum” “Traumas” “Victims” “We risk being bound hand and foot by the USA”
Sermitsiaq	Munk Veirum	As above. Worth noting that these two texts are institutional analyses republished or reported by Sermitsiaq — they carry a different register from news reporting.	8 Mar 2026	Digital unity /resilience Nordic Safe Cities analysis	“We stand together, Kalaallit Nunaat is ours” “in a way where our country has equal rights”
Sermitsiaq	n.a.	As above.	7 Mar 2026	Economic frame /geopolitical value Grønlandsbanken analysis	“uncertainty bordering on fear” “massive pressure from the U.S.” Central Bank’s 2025 annual report

					“international interest is driven by Greenland's strategic location, security policy significance, and access to critical resources”
Sermitsiaq	n.a.	As above.	5 Mar 2026	Renegotiation /equal rights Siumut press conference	“Takeover” “The election program” “Economic spin-off effects” “where our country has equal rights” “Kalaallit Rangers”

Table C: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Framework and Analytical Categories

Phase 1, the textual dimension (micro level)

- What phenomena can be explored in the media? → How the Greenlandic search for autonomy is portrayed in the media

Focus: How is the language constructed?

Naming and reference: How is Greenland referred to?

Prediction: What qualities are attributed to the actors?

Agency: passive and active actors

Metaphors: e.g. pawn on a chessboard

Phase 2, the discursive practice (meso level)

Focus: how is the news produced and who gets a voice?

- Intertextuality and sourcing: whose voices are prioritized in established media (and official sources)
- Strategic discourse constructions: Which competing discourses are drawn upon to construct the story?
- Presupposition: Common sense? What is perceived as common sense? Hegemony?

Phase 3: The social practice (macro level)

Focus: How does this text reinforce or challenge power structures?

- Geopolitical power: Does the text justify “Great power” interests over sovereignty?
- Colonial echoes: does the Danish or US discourse reflect a civilizing mission or a tutor-student relationship?
- Identity construction: How is the US vs the dynamic built?
- Legitimacy: How is power justified or contested? Investigates rule breaches (*illegitimacy*), gaps between rules and beliefs (*legitimacy deficit*), or the active withdrawal of consent (*delegitimation*).
- Look for “Absences”, what is not said?

	Analysis Category	USA (CNN, Fox News, NYT)	DK (DR, TV2)	GL (Sermitsiaq, KNR)
Phase 1	Naming and reference	“Acquisition,” “Great hospital boat,” “A deal.”	“The Realm,” “Small nations”	“Inuit,” (peacefully); “Sovereign,” “The country.”
	Prediction	Greenland is “sick” and “not	Greenland is “not for sale”.	GL is “willing to collaborate”

		being taken care of”.	DK is “humane”.	but “under pressure”.
	Agency	Transactional: US will “take over” or “do it the hard way”.	Protective: DK “rejects” plans; “welds” the realm together.	Active: GL “chooses” NATO; “bangs on the table” for info.
	Metaphors	“Hospital boat”: Benevolence as a mask for control. “Real estate”: Buying land.	“Welded”: Inseparable unit. “Dark chapters”: Colonial past.	“Sinking”: Losing democracy. “Pause”: independence on hold.
Phase 2	Intertextuality and sourcing	Quotes Trump’s social media posts and US envoys (Landry).	Quotes PM Frederiksen and King Frederik to project unity.	High reliance on GL voices (Lynge, Nielsen) to challenge US quotes.
	Strategic Discursive Constructions	Security/Economic: Greenland as a strategic asset needed for “Security”.	Solidarity/Status Quo: The Realm as a unified front against external bullying.	Sovereignty/Decolonial: NATO as a tool to prevent US “acquisition”.
Phase 3	Identity construction	The Great Power: A global force that “gets what it wants” through deals.	The Benevolent Partner: A leader protecting a “fantastic	The Arctic Diplomat: A peaceful actor using global rules to survive.

			history” together.	
	Geopolitical power	Challenges the “old world order” norms in favor of raw realpolitik.	Asserts authority over the Arctic through “coordinated” Nuuk-CPH diplomacy.	Resits US “Great power” acquisition by leveraging EU/NATO.
	Legitimacy	<i>US Illegitimacy:</i> Rule breaches through aggressive peacetime acquisition rhetoric.	<i>Danish Legitimacy Deficit:</i> The gap between formal autonomy and postcolonial practice.	<i>Greenlandic Delegitimation:</i> Active sovereignty through the withdrawal of consent.
	Absences	Total absence of Greenlandic will or consent in official US rhetoric.	Often ignores GL’s historical “Camouflaged colony” status in news reports.	No mention of specific military “enemies” like Russia/China.

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