Understanding Violence and Conflict:
Greenland as a Theory-Building Case Study

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Abstract

Greenland is a land where unresolved conundrums and fast-paced emerging threats intersect. If not properly addressed, these could worsen the critical rates of suicide (one of the highest in the world and 6-7 times higher than the other Nordic countries), multigenerational trauma, and other forms of abuse. By developing and applying a renewed conceptualization of violent conflicts aimed at unravelling their roots, this study recognises that there are precise violent phenomena and conflictual dimensions that curb Greenlandic development across human security and international relations. The study confirms that the Danish 'benign' colonisation, by constituting a discriminatory relationship, provoked frustration among the Inuit, fostering the psychological push factors to self-destruction and violence against other fragile individuals, while environmental conditions and contextual phenomena limited violence at the micro-level. More broadly, the case study demonstrates that discrimination in its wider sense is the main source of violent conflicts and that the redistribution of the ownership of resources is the main way to prevent large and organised violent phenomena. In fact, Greenland currently needs a multi-agency psychosocial healing programme that addresses households and individual therapy. Simultaneously, further financial investments and commercial endeavours eased by climate change must consider any psychosocial impact and the local ownership of the means of production, both of which were missed during the colonial period. Further studies with the conceptual lenses provided in this thesis are needed to quantitatively evaluate the effective dimensions of these phenomena in and outside of Greenland. This approach is crucial, especially in the face of exogenous and inevitable threats such as climate change and the great powers' strategic-military confrontation, which are particularly affecting the Arctic region and other fragile areas.

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Piffiit Nutaat

"Uninngaguma iluanngilaq
Nivissaguma soqutaanngilaq
Innarsiorneq nangikkiga
Misinnarsivoq sisulersunga...
Iternialerpunga sinissimangaarama
- ullut pingajuat qiteqqutereerporooq!
Siunersisalerpara pisuunngorumallutik
Uku tamaaniittut nanertuisuullutik
Kalaallit Nunaat qitornatit
Kissumiaannarsinnaanngilatit
Piffiit nutaat atulerpavut

New Times

"I wake up
I have been sleeping for a long time
They tell me two and half days have
gone by for two and half centuries
I realise that they are still here
They are here to get rich and oppress us
Greenland, "The Lands of the People"
You cannot keep sheltering
your children from harm
New Times have begun
The old days we have left behind."

Sume, 1973.

Introduction

The song above was produced by a Greenlandic rock band in the 1970s, embodying the disruptive struggle between tradition and modernity, the unsolved past and the uncertain future of Greenlanders (Johansen, 2001). In that period, they suffered forced displacements, discrimination, and increasing suicide rates. Still today, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland)[1] has one of the highest suicide rates in the world – 6-7 times higher than the other Nordic countries (Statistics Greenland, 2022) – as the intergenerational traumas and other forms of abuse remain unaddressed. The cited song illustrates the deep wounds that are inextricably linked to political and diplomatic conundrums, as well as economic roots and repercussions. Still, all these factors have never been deepened in a unified and coordinated research effort, being only mentioned across psychological studies, sociological research, and politological approaches. In fact, it is complicated to determine a causal relationship between specific policies and mental health, a linkage that has only been mentioned in previous studies at the speculative level. Indeed, the causes of suicide must be researched in the individual background. But when hundreds of individual experiences – a high number in proportion to Greenland's population of just about 57,000 people (Statistics Greenland, 2022) – follow similar patterns and when the numbers rise in correspondence with precise sociopolitical events, questions must be asked. As demonstrated below, creative and cross-sectoral approaches provide answers to apparently unsolvable problems. Most importantly, the aim is not to determine causality between variables, but to research patterns and adapt responses.

This is specifically crucial in political sciences because Greenland and the Arctic are believed to be 'exceptional' peaceful cases even during periods of revived inter-state confrontation. It is evident that these depictions ignore

[1] Many authors advocate for the use of the indigenous name of Greenland as part of the attempt to fully decolonize it from Denmark. Still, for simplicity, this thesis uses the English translation.

numbers and statistics that, in other countries, proportionately, would constitute a national emergency. Moreover, Greenland is characterised by a struggle for power, marked by fluid identities, and subject to external interests. Therefore, this thesis attempts to explain the high rates of violence in Greenland by developing and applying a renewed conceptualisation of the roots of violent conflicts. The case of Greenland demonstrates that discrimination and other forms of nonphysical violence prelude the breakout of systemic physical violence. Furthermore, it proves that the redistribution of resources, both intended as material wealth and freedoms, is the main means to prevent broad and organised violent phenomena, while strategies of psychosocial healing could provide the necessary tools to reconcile societies. Finally, the complete resolution or effective prevention of violent conflicts requires a humanist metamorphosis at the level of political and strategic guidance (Morin, 2023): a combined multi-agency redistribution of resources and psychosocial healing.

By adopting the presented approach, the dissertation responds to the lack of theoretical solution-oriented approaches in the study of Greenland. At the same time, it contributes to the existing theories by incorporating emerging approaches in the field of peacebuilding focused on restructuring the understanding of economic growth and social relations while rejecting the conceptualization of violence as an unavoidable and unintended social consequence of political-economic activities. More specifically, it advocates against the structuring of the field of Strategic Studies, under the political science umbrella, as a dehumanising science that disregards human life as the only possible ontological unity. Simultaneously, it also aims at transforming the culture of postcolonial ‘blame’ into a useful assessment of lessons learned for future development.

The adopted method is the dialogical theory-building case study. The research process is essentially not linear because the existing theoretical frameworks provide multidirectional points of view on the case study, while deepening the latter both confirms some theoretical tenets and highlights gaps.

This reveals an unprecedented opportunity for developing a conceptual framework (the Discrimination Diagram) that implements existing theories of conflicts. Furthermore, a proper framework will facilitate the refining of practical proposals, associated both with general assumptions and case-study needs. The main research question is therefore articulated as such: how do the strategic interests of Greenland influence the phenomenon of micro-level violence among the local population?

The application of the Discrimination Diagram developed here shows that the Inuit never suffered too much scarcity and discrimination, but enough to provoke micro-level longstanding cycles of violence. Furthermore, discrimination occurred as a result of specific international strategic needs exerted by Denmark and, to a lesser extent, the United States (US). This demonstrates that (1) Greenland needs a proper conflict resolution approach focused on reconciling the population with their past while being mindful of rapid economic developments that could further disrupt their livelihoods; (2) Denmark should actively take part in this process; and (3) more broadly, social violence and conflicts are determined in the first place by discrimination by those who control political-economic resources. These findings imply that resolution and prevention successes ultimately depend on systemic local change alongside a redefinition and regulation of external relations. Eventually, the research should move from the speculative to the evidence-based level, to prove these conclusions through meta-analysis and on-field investigations. Moreover, the effort of demonstrating the recurrence of the dilemmas provoked by violent competition and repression does not sacrifice the uniqueness of the Greenlandic history and set of experiences. Accordingly, because the topic is peculiar and the structure does not involve a clear distinction between theory and discussion, the epistemological, methodological, and operational limitations are discussed throughout the dissertation within the relevant sections. Hence, this thesis aims at setting a still point in the literature on Greenland, synthesising how global politics affect local sociopolitical issues, and demonstrating how the local

polities should embark on a resolution of the social traumas and the relations with Denmark to free the Greenlandic political-economic-diplomatic potential while guaranteeing the protection of the local livelihood and development.

Fig. 1: Map of Greenland (ReliefWeb, 2023).

Methodology: The Dialogical Theory-Building Case Study

The adopted methodology consists of a qualitative dialogical theory-building case study (hereafter the 'dialogical method'). As will be shown, there exist substantial gaps in understanding the sociopolitical processes in Greenland, a symptom of the lack of academic attention to the topic. The elaboration of further studies implies the adaptation of new perspectives on the matter, which brings us to an epistemological dilemma: the particularity of the case does not find a proper theoretical definition in the study of violent conflicts. At the political level, Greenland finds itself at a standpoint, and its society is relatively safe and peaceful. Geophysical and social issues are periodically under scrutiny in other sciences, while there have not been relevant developments around the independence process and international relations. Still, the disappointment is palpable. Here resides the innovation: instead of focusing on the phenomenology of the case, the potentiality of the non-case can illustrate new paths for the direction of studies and practical proposals. By bringing together the case of Greenland and the theories of violent conflicts, the systemic obstacles against Greenlandic development are unravelled. Nonetheless, it is not possible to apply the existing theories without a proper reconceptualization. First, because the studied context is empirically dissociated from the phenomena that those theories were designed for: Greenland never experienced a violent conflict. Secondly, the existing theories must be updated according to new studies and approaches that have not been properly integrated into the academic literature yet. In sum, studying the applicability of the theories of conflict to the case of Greenland implies the necessity of a dialogue between the theory and the empirical case.

The dialogical method derives from a portion of the social and political sciences concerned with the importance of theories as the generalisation of findings from specific case studies. As defined by Westerman (2011: 452),

> "The theory-building case study approach can contribute to validating and developing theories. With regard to theory validation, it can provide an especially compelling kind of confirmation of theoretical tenets. With respect to theory development, it offers a method that can lead to refining and elaborating a theory."

On one side, the study of Greenland passes through a polyhedron of theories and assumptions. Simultaneously, it provides the basis to deconstruct and improve said approaches. In any case, the relations among research, theory, and practice are inevitably dialogical and multidirectional (Rule and John, 2015). In fact, all case studies involve a prior consideration of theory (Yin, 2009) and a subsequent confirmation or modification of its tenets. Still, when explicitly applied, the dialogical method is based on specific ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Ontology and Epistemology: Critical Realism

The reasons behind the choice of this method go beyond the material necessity of reconciling the distance between the case study and theory. The ontological and epistemological stances at the bases of this methodology, referring to critical realism, recognise the constant relation and influence among reality, human perceptions, and social phenomena. Usually being the object of study, these are agents of study themselves, as they exist independently from and influence the will of the researcher. Introduced by the philosopher Roy Bhaskar and developed by other authors (Archer, 1982; Bhaskar, 2008; Cruickshank, 2007; Elder-Vass, 2010; Gorski, 2008; Lawson, 1997; Little, 2016; Porpora, 2015; Pridmore and Bendixsen, 2017; Sayer, 2000; Steinmetz,

1998; Vandenberghe, 2015)[2], critical realism is a "meta-theoretical reflexive position, concerned with providing a philosophically informed account of science and social science, which can in turn inform our empirical investigations" (Archer et al., 2016). It benefits from a variety of contributions, including positivism, interpretivism, modernism, realism, structuralism, and their relative 'post-' evolutions (Zhang, 2022), drawing from a "heterogeneous genetic pool deriving from Marxist, Bourdieusian, Habermasian, and Latourian positions" (Archer et al., 2016). It has been praised for resolving contradictions between other philosophies of science, cross-analysing different strata of reality, and working with dialectics beyond dichotomies (Alderson, 2019).

Through critical realism, the research aims at identifying patterns and relationships and interpreting the findings in the context of underlying structures and mechanisms (Danermark, Ekström and Karlsson, 2019). This approach implies the use of methodologies that uncover causal linkages that connect social realities while acknowledging that cause and effect may not be directly related (Hoon, 2013). In these terms, critical realism posits that observable reality exists independently of our perceptions and interpretations, shaping social phenomena (Bhaskar, 2008). Still, similar to constructivist and interpretivist perspectives, our perceptions themselves are part of these phenomena, meaning that the study of reality is fallible and mediated by our social and cultural background (Bhaskar, 2008). Indeed, at the methodological level, this approach assumes the existence and aims at finding traces at the core of broader social phenomena. These causal linkages are then proved or disproved through the case studies, which require critical reflections on the processes of knowledge production. Consequently, in the phase of theory-building, this approach requires the researcher to critically apply existing frameworks, proposing alternatives to better grasp the underlying mechanisms of said social phenomena (Bhaskar, 2008). In sum, knowledge is socially

[2] For an overview of the fields in which critical realism has been applied, see Easton (2010: 119).

influenced, not determined, and reality is made up of many different objects, powers, and mechanisms operating at the same time (Danermark, Ekström and Karlsson, 2019: 221). Hence, causal laws must be analysed as tendencies, not as universal empirical regularities (Danermark, Ekström and Karlsson, 2019: 221). In this sense, the 'critical' aspect comes from (1) the transcendental feature of reality, (2) the critique of both extremist positivism and hermeneutic idealism in social science, and (3) the call for methodological pluralism (Danermark, Ekström and Karlsson, 2019; Edwards, O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014)[3].

Qualitative Case Selection and Theory Building

The qualitative dialogical method is constituted by the qualitative selection of the case and the application of the theory. As explained by Styles (2003: 477),

> "Qualitative research consists of comparing ideas with observations. [It] yields results in words rather than numbers, uses empathy and personal understanding rather than detached observation, places observations in context rather than in isolation, focuses on good examples and special cases rather than representative samples, and seeks to empower its participants rather than merely observe them."

For this reason, the qualitative approach is particularly useful in deeply studying a specific case, whether it is an actor, a relation, or a process, as a component of a broader population, deliberately approached for its explanatory value (see Gerring, 2007). Greenland has been selected for its potential theoretical prominence (Seawright and Gerring, 2008), as it is an underdeveloped case study and presents fundamental preconditions that allow comparison with other

[3] To deepen the philosophical roots of critical realism, see the differences among Habermas, "Knowledge and Human Interests" (1972), Kuhn, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" (1962), and Feyerabend, "Explanation, Reduction and Empiricism" (1962).

cases within strategic, postcolonial, and conflict studies. Nonetheless, Greenland is an 'extreme case' because of its unusual and especially problematic character with respect to the adopted theoretical lenses (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 230). As demonstrated, the exceptionality of the case does not preclude the full applicability of the dialogical method, which involves a conscious attempt to maximise variance on the dimension of interest (Seawright and Gerring, 2008: 302). Nonetheless, the generalisability of the case study and the possibilities and limitations of the theory building phase require further reflection.

The causal explanations produced by the case study are replicable by corroboration, meaning successive testing of the results of the study in other cases (Easton, 2010: 123). Corroboration is facilitated by the establishment of explicative concepts, carried out in a 'retroductive' process. Retroduction is a method of scientific inference developed and employed by critical realists to investigate causal relations either through the analysis of raw data or a study based on existing literature (Alderson, 2019). Meant as a reinforcing component to induction and deduction, it brings the study to an epistemological closure, however flawed and temporary (Easton, 2010: 124). In practical terms, retroduction is about advancing from the empirical observations of events to arrive at a conceptualization of structures and trans-factual conditions (Danermark, Ekström and Karlsson, 2019: 117; see also Lawson, 1997, and Sayer, 1992).

Therefore, the theory-building phase of this research aims at a reformulation of the theories of violent conflicts. A portion of the literature in social and political sciences asserts the relevance of theory mainly on the assumption that it is unavoidable and permeates almost every aspect of the study, meaning that (1) it clarifies epistemological and methodological choices, (2) it guides the structuring of theoretical frameworks, and (3) it constitutes the lenses to analyse findings (Anfara & Mertz, 2015; Collins and Stockton, 2018; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Glesne, 2011; Jaccard and Jacoby, 2010; Sayer, 1992). Most

importantly, theory-building from a case study provides insights for improving social life (Saldaña and Omasta, 2018). In contrast to these positions, other authors stress the limitations, mainly focusing on the low generalizability, analytical power, and pervasiveness of case-based analyses (Hoon, 2013; Merriam, 1988; Rousseau et al., 2008; Sandelowski and Barroso, 2007; Thomas, 2010; Verschuren, 2003). Their main conclusion is that the primacy of the single case, its specificities, and epistemological requirements are incompatible with any theoretical 'archetypization'. Accordingly, other authors advocate for more cautiousness: the study can move upwards from one case to another only when the claims are realistically translated into probabilistic terms (Cartwright, 1999; Peters and Fontaine, 2020). Common critiques of theory-building case studies are based on the assumed lack of transparency and overreliance on assumptions that, respectively, hinder the understanding of the knowledge producing capabilities and blur the salience and importance of data (Collins and Stockton, 2018). The only counter-arguments to this alleged scientific myopia are rigorousness and intellectual honesty applied throughout the whole process, formulating the research on a rich diversity of literature to contrast the dogmatic application of specific theoretical tenets. As well-explained by Danermark, Ekström and Karlsson (2019), in the same way that experiments are run in laboratories for natural sciences to construct laws from isolating elements in a close environment, the act of building theories in social sciences is carried out by isolating social elements and mechanisms in the close environment of the mind of the researcher, with all the relative limitations and pitfalls. This is because structures, not elements, can be said to be invariant under certain transformations (Sayer, 1992): human behaviour *vis à vis* human beings.

In conclusion, the main objective is not to create something indisputable. Thomas (2010) argues that the case study method is more useful to contribute to the *phronesis*, the Aristotelic concept that identifies the type of knowledge useful for practical purposes, as opposed to the *sophia*, the theoretical wisdom.

A case study is indeed a form of exemplary knowledge, but what is extracted from it, even in the social sciences, cannot be reduced only to practical knowledge applicable to act or guide actions in operating for the sole case study. Instead, it also contributes to the broader *sophia*, not so much for its explanatory purposes as for its indicatory power to show and address what lies at the core of human interactions. In this sense, the relation between theories and case studies is, to different degrees, continuously dialogical. Each person is different from one another, and each couple of individuals is different from any other combination. Eventually, in space and time, each community, state, and region and their interrelations will differ, necessitating some kind of specificity.

Methodology and Limitations

In conclusion, the methodological approach to this thesis is constituted by a multi-level review of primary and secondary sources, organised as follows:

I. The qualitative systematic review[4] of the literature focused on Greenland aimed at comparing and integrating the findings from a series of studies
II. A qualitative systematic review of the relevant existing frameworks to assess violent conflicts

This dissertation aims at integrating the approaches and results from the majority of the publications on Greenland. It cannot be considered all-encompassing because of two main factors. First, the research is carried out through information gathering on online platforms and does not involve the involvement of experts on the matter. Secondly, the author is not able to have access to Greenlandic or Danish documents and publications if they have not

[4] There exist many different approaches to reviewing the literature of a work, with different vocabularies across fields and time. The terminology in this case is taken from Grant and Booth (2009), which contains a comprehensive overview of said approaches. See also Boote and Beile (2005).

been officially translated and proofread in other languages. This constitutes a crucial limitation for both the validity of the dissertation arguments and the very complex attempt at decolonizing the scholarly knowledge production processes: this dissertation can be complete only through the integration of the Greenlanders' opinions and expectations. While the first limitation is compensated by the assumption that the scholarly cyberspace is indeed a source of information sufficiently representative of global reality, the second limitation could be addressed only partially by translating the research into Greenlandic. By doing so, this dissertation would foster the transfer of knowledge towards the population subject of the study[5]. In particular, the Review is implemented through an appropriate abstracting sample (see Snyder, 2019) aimed at organising the different sources into thematic areas and chronological order. This same procedure is applied to the theories and frameworks of conflict analysis to extrapolate fundamental concepts. Thus, the latter are qualitatively and critically applied to the information gathered in the Literature Review.

[5] To deepen the limitations and recommendations on language differences in social and political science, see van Nes et al. (2010). Perhaps, adding the translation of the abstract in the language of the studied population could foster inclusiveness in the academic arena and knowledge spillover from the latter towards other professional fields.

Historical Background

Precolonial Greenlandic history is composed of myths and stories handed down orally from generation to generation within family nucleuses. The latter got synchronised with contemporary European history as the result of sporadic relations between Greenlanders and European explorers during the 15th and 16th centuries (Sørensen and Knudsen, 2020). After a Lutheran evangelist expedition in 1721 set the start of the Dano-Norwegian colonisation (McLisky and Møller, 2021: 690), the history of Greenland began to be portrayed in solely European terms. Only more recently have anecdotal studies on the local oral tradition been combined with information from European books to sustain an independent narration of Greenland's past (Sørensen and Knudsen, 2020). It is crucial to state this from the very beginning, as the lack of knowledge of the Greenlandic people and their heritage generates dilemmas around the political understanding of the Greenlandic identity and their security issues.

The Christianization of Greenland was designed to reinforce the colonial interests of the Dano-Norwegian monarchy in competition with the other European empires (Cranz, 2009). At the beginning of the 19th century, the Napoleonic Wars did not have any notable effects on the Greenlandic population (McLisky, 2021: 271). Still, the Treaty of Kiel in 1814 sanctioned the separation of the Danish-Norwegian reigns, and Greenland became a solely Danish colony alongside Iceland and the Faroe Islands. This event set the bases for exclusive economic-commercial relations between Greenland and Denmark, with relevant repercussions for the local population. On one side, Danish perceptions and narratives romanticised Greenland as a fragile territory whose population, "blameless noble savages", had to be safeguarded from "the dangers of civilisation and […] damaging financial and spiritual influences in all areas" (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 15). While motivated by the apparent concern of Danish administrators about the 'purity' of indigenous people, these

policies came from the necessity to protect Danish interests over Greenland, as its sovereignty was not officially recognised by the other countries (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 20). In fact, over the course of hundreds of years, Denmark had become continually smaller, augmenting the importance of its control over Greenland. This situation culminated with the dispute between Denmark and Norway over the sovereignty of East Greenland in 1932, after the Eastern coast was occupied and reclaimed by Norwegian hunters in the name of King Håkon (Preuss, 1932). Eventually, the International Court awarded Denmark sovereignty over all of Greenland (Royal Danish Government v. Royal Norwegian Government, 1933). As a result of the Danish patronising approach, due also to the harshness of the territory and the distance from usual trade routes, Greenland was sealed off from the rest of the world until the Second World War (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 15).

The global conflict marked the breakthrough of Greenland as a crucial asset for the maintenance of security in the Atlantic and Arctic regions. Contextually, it constituted the end of the century-long isolation imposed by Denmark. Recognising the inability of Denmark to protect Greenland from an invasion by Nazi Germany and the threat that this could have represented for Europe and the US, the latter set in motion a wide-scale military and civilian programme aimed at creating base facilities in the southern part of the island (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 24). Throughout the war, German military activities were discovered along the east coast, and a few clashes occurred (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 26). During this period of heightened exposure to international events, products from the US and Canada became rapidly available in many Greenlandic cities, while Greenland became the supplier of fishery products to the European market (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 31). In 1953, following the United Nations declaration on decolonization, Denmark adopted a new constitution and Greenland was incorporated as Danish territory, thus losing its 'official colonial' status (Stenbaek, 1987). Contextually, a series of policies were implemented to modify the social and ethnic landscape

of Greenland either for the ‘strategic services’ in accordance with the US or in attempt to modernise and ‘Danificate’ the island, with serious repercussions on the Greenlandic population and the Danish-Greenlandic relations (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2020). As a result, the local population began to mobilise against the lack of political and cultural recognition (McLisky, 2021: 274), and by the late 1970s, the movement towards full independence from Denmark was in full swing (Petersen, 1991, cited in McLisky, 2021: 276). In 1979, the Greenlanders approved through a referendum the Home Rule Act, which resulted in the establishment of a parliament and a government with legislative and administrative powers in the fields of health, education, and environment (Larsen, 1992; Rud, 2017). The Greenlandic willingness of independence brought a new referendum in 1982 that resulted in the withdrawal from the membership to the European Economic Community, precedingly inherited from the Danish rule (Grydehøj, 2020).

Since then, voices for an independent Greenland continued to arise. In 2009, with another referendum, the Self-Government Act was adopted by Denmark as an extension of powers to the Greenlandic Home Rule. The parliament became responsible for all governmental portfolios apart from national security and foreign affairs (McLisky, 2021: 277). With increasing international attention to the matter and the election of the nationalist Siumut party in 2013, new perspectives on the historical and post-colonial relations with Denmark were given attention in the political arena, and a Reconciliation Commission was established in 2014 (McLisky, 2021: 278). In the past decade, the political, economic, and social life of Greenland has kept evolving, especially in attempting to re-structuring the relationship with Denmark and their role at the international level, questioning complex matters between climate risks, economic opportunities, and intergenerational traumas. In fact, as shown in the next section, there exists a local awareness on these issues, which instead lack a proper assessment in the academic and political fields.

Literature Review

The literature on Greenland relevant to the scope of this dissertation has been concerned with a variety of issues revolving around complex social and political processes. In the past, the studies pointed out the lack of academic and professional contributions, but in the last few years, many gaps have been filled with peculiar approaches, creativity, and sensitiveness towards an area that is believed to be increasingly fragile. Given the cross-sectoral nature of the chosen approach, the pieces of literature are categorised according to three areas:

I. Sociological and psychological research on health issues in the Greenlandic population
II. Politological studies focused on the decolonization process, the political-economic dimension of Greenlandic independence, and its framing under the international relations umbrella
III. Other theoretical approaches to the Arctic

Mental Health and Society

The rapid modernization of Greenland under Danish rule, which involved the transition from an indigenous economy of subsistence to a post-industrial system within a few generations, is the main factor at the basis of the epidemic of suicides in the 1970s and 1980s. Contrarily, the recent increases in suicide rates do not entail any form of sociopolitical explanation, simply suggesting prevention policies at the national and local levels. Intergenerational trauma has only recently been addressed. In fact, news and online articles are the only sources that directly address the recent trends in suicides in the face of past colonial policies and intergenerational traumas.

Suicide is “death caused by self-directed injurious behaviour” (Crosby, Ortega and Melanson, 2011; Goodfellow, Kõlves and de Leo, 2018). The study

of suicide aims to unravel the factors that push an individual towards the act of self-destruction. When it involves broader populations, it becomes an issue of public health, and it is studied in sociological terms, making it a relatively cross-sectoral issue as well as a crucial element in building different approaches to human security. Studies on suicides and violence in Greenland date back to the second half of the 19th century, as scholarly interest in the question of suicides as a sociological phenomenon rose exactly in those years. The book "Suicide: A Study in Sociology" by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim first introduced in 1897 the epidemiological approach based on statistical data[6]. Still, the studies on Greenland were interested mainly in observing qualitatively the anthropological behaviour of the indigenous population, focusing on their adaptability to and the adoption of societal norms as the result of a particularly restraining environment (Nansen, 1891), including comparative studies on the differences among 'Eskimos' populations[7] (Holm, 1887; Kraus, 1973; Rasmussen, 1929). In that scenario, the act of suicide was the result of a collective cost-benefit evaluation aimed at sharing limited resources in the most effective manner, adorned by a devoted spirituality[8] (Grove and Lynge, 1979). With the progressive Christianization of the Greenlandic people, "suffering acquired a position in human existence with influence on the salvation of the soul, while suicide resulted in perdition" (Grove and Lynge, 1979: 389). Accordingly, these evolving social values demonstrate how, in the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, the act of suicide became "virtually unknown" in Greenland (Nansen, 1891: 124). Progressively, in the second half of the 20th century, suicide rates in Greenland started to rise as a direct effect of the Danish reforms during the 1950s and 1960s, which brought "such radical alterations in

[6] Epidemiological studies focus on the frequency and causes of a specific disease in a population, whose results are employed in prevention strategies and the management of patients (Belbasis and Bellou, 2018).
[7] The word 'Eskimos' is no longer used as it is not acknowledged by the local populations, which instead refer to themselves as Inuit or Yupik in the case of Canada and Alaska, and as Greenlanders or 'Kalaallit' in the case of Greenland (Kaplan, 2021).
[8] See the theories about the phenomena of silicide, infanticide, and suicide in preindustrial societies (Harris, 1978) and specifically in the case of the Arctic populations (Kjellstrom, 1974).

the structure of society as to decisively alter the function of the family and result in a rupture of the traditional ways of life" (Grove and Lynge, 1979: 389). In fact, while the suicide rate in Greenland between 1880 and 1930 was stable, varying between 3 and 5 cases per 100.000 per year, in 1972 the rate was 50 per 100.000 (Grove and Lynge, 1973). Simultaneously, proper epidemiological and statistical research had been carried out based on the data provided by hospitals and police archives, aimed at identifying the risk factors for suicide as well as time and regional variations (Hansen and Wang, 1984). The common patterns and the most important motives for suicide were physical or mental suffering and a feeling of uselessness from no longer being a productive member of the group (Leighton and Hughes, 1955), which generally provoked emotional disturbances, alcohol problems, and criminality (Grove and Lynge, 1979: 390). This phenomenon was synthesised as a "social and emotional conflict" that provoked suicidal behaviour, especially in young men (Grove and Lynge, 1979).

The knowledge about the Greenlandic population and the phenomenon of suicides constructed between the end of the 19th century and the Second World War is very limited. Firstly, Danish authorities often did not allow the conduct of studies and interviews on the island to 'protect' the 'immaculate indigenous population' (McLisky, 2021). Furthermore, the few studies carried out relied on qualitative surveys and personal interpretation, demonstrating that the phenomenon of suicide was not prominent at all. After the war, critical geopolitical changes led the Danish government to adopt a series of policies and reforms in Greenland. When the multigenerational effects of these policies started to arise, academic attention grew accordingly, with renewed methodological attention. There is the possibility that suicides were underreported between the 19th and 20th centuries, while post-war modernization brought better systems of data gathering in hospitals and police departments. Nonetheless, this does not explain the extreme percentage increase in suicide cases, which until that moment was linked to the inner emotional-

cultural conflict of 'fragile' indigenous individuals without questioning the Danish colonisation. Still, because of the little attention given to Greenland in the past, these few studies are essential to sufficiently understanding the context of relevant historical changes and their effects on the Greenlandic population.

Contextually, alongside steady economic development, intergovernmental cooperation around common health issues increased. The Nordic Council for Arctic Medical Research was founded in 1966 and tasked with investigating cross-national matters of public health in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland (Harvald and Lynge, 2003), hence studying the dramatic increase in suicides in Greenland (Lynge, 1985). Nonetheless, probably because they are funded by government resources, these publications are wary of addressing any political considerations. Still, resource management is often mentioned as a crucial question in the safeguarding of the Greenlandic people as well as the protection of their historical and cultural heritage. At the same time, studies also critically assessed the quality of the suicide statistics in Greenland, with the conclusion that these were "generally reliable" (Thorslund and Misfeldt, 1989). Methods and policies were also analysed, for example, assessing the efficiency of depression questionnaires (Coulehan, Schulberg and Block, 1989) and the effects of alcohol and drug misuse policies (Room, 1990).

In correspondence with the exponential growth of academic production in the 1990s, the publications on the suicides in Greenland started to become more nuanced in both methodological and thematic terms. Bjerregaard and Juel (1990) introduced the concept of "avoidable deaths" to suggest that some deaths occur because of specific socioeconomic conditions and political will. Their study highlighted clear regional patterns and causes, stressing the practical possibility of addressing and preventing the high rates of Greenlandic mortality. Thorslund (1990) ran a series of "small scale psychological autopsies", testing the feelings of Greenlanders against theories of socialisation and acculturation. Other studies compared Greenland with Denmark (Bjerregaard, 1990b) and other Nordic countries (Retterstøl, 1992; Syme, 1999), as well as the

phenomenon of suicide with other health-related issues and causes of death – such as homicides, drugs, and alcohol consumption (Guôjónsson and Pétursson, 1990; Hart Hansen, 1988; Bjerregaard, 1991). All these studies reached the same conclusion: the levels of violence, mortality, and substance abuse in Greenland between the 1950s and the 1990s were dramatically higher than in the other Arctic regions (see fig. 2, 3, 4). While criticising the evident lack of political intervention and attention to geographical and intergenerational variations (Bjerregaard, 1990a; Thorslund, 1991), all these studies praised the precision in cataloguing death certificates.

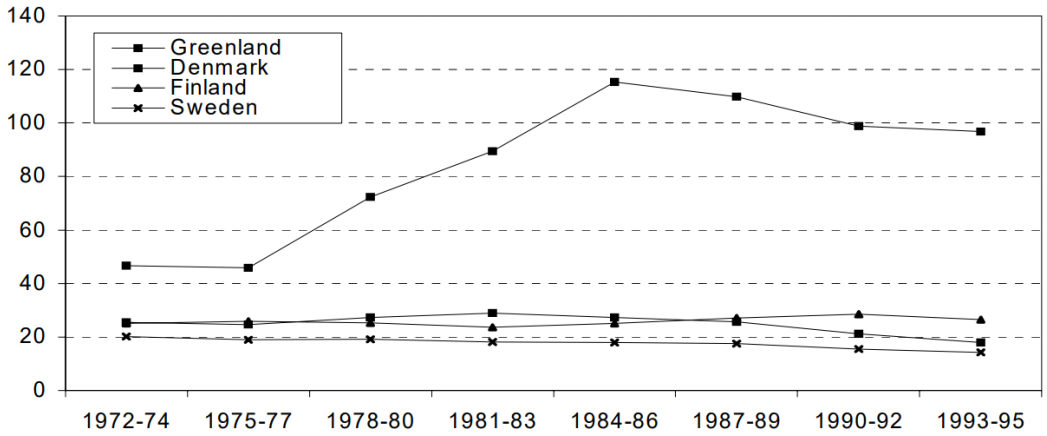

Fig. 2: Suicide rates per 100.000 population 1972-1995 (Leineweber, 2000: 12).

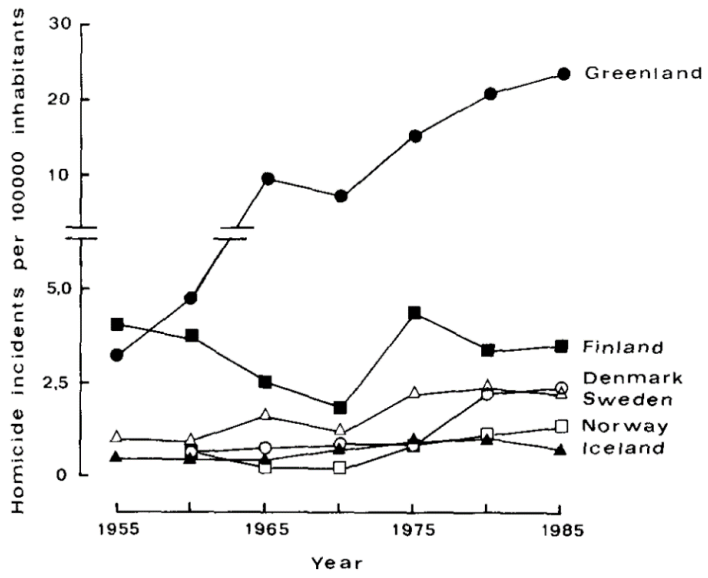

Fig. 3: Homicides per 100.000 inhabitants in Nordic countries (Guôjónsson and Pétursson,

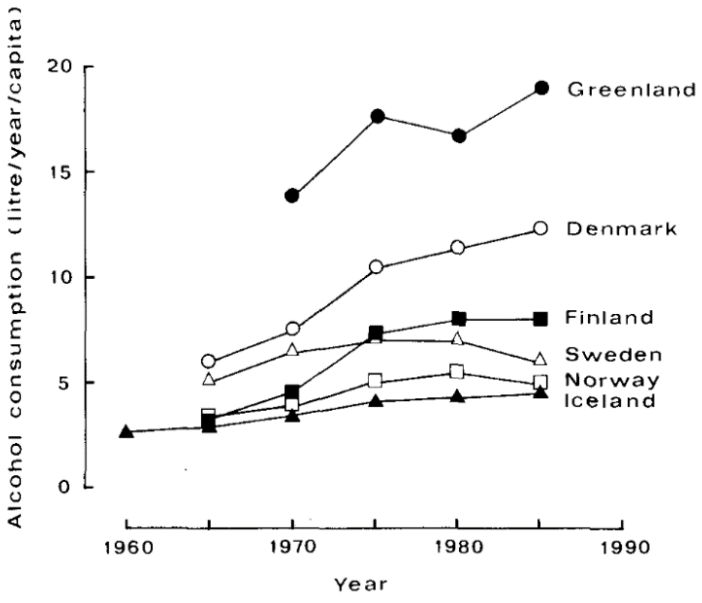

Fig. 4: Alcohol consumption (litre/year/capita) in Nordic countries (Guôjónsson and Pétursson, 1990: 52).

In the 2000s, scholars' publications kept developing the premises introduced in the previous decade. The same methodological approaches served as the basis for studying time variations and sociocultural factors (Hicks, Bjerregaard and Berman, 2007; Iburg, Brønnum-Hansen and Bjerregaard, 2001; Leineweber et al., 2001). Notably, in those years, sociological studies started to increasingly mention the colonisation and discrimination of circumpolar peoples as the root cause of the mental health issues in the indigenous population (Bjerregaard, 2001; Lehti et al., 2009). Firstly, Björkstén, Bjerregaard and Kripke (2005) further clarified by reviewing official data that "the increase [in suicides] cannot be explained by seasonal factors". Secondly, the decolonization approach facilitated the coordination of several research attempts to investigate common issues among indigenous populations and their mental health, also defined as 'aboriginal health' (Bjerregaard et al., 2004; Leenaars et al., 2007; Reading, 2003). Lastly, in analogy to the question of decolonization, growing attention was given to the positive effect of education and cultural representation in preventing mental health issues, especially among the youth (Bjerregaard, Curtis and Greenland Population Study, 2002; David, 2001; Le Févre, 2004; Niclasen and Köhler, 2009). Nonetheless, the cited authors found it hard to determine the causal relationship between specific modernising reforms and suicides. Contrarily, modernization was regarded as a "package" that amplified the risk factors of suicide (Bjerregaard and Lynge, 2006), alongside other circumstances, such as environmental change (Curtis, Kvernmo and Bjerregaard, 2005).

In that period, the main contributions came from the literature concerned with exploring the discrimination and decolonization of Greenlandic people, especially focusing on the youth and substance abuse. Still, because the causality between modernization and suicides is highly problematic to determine in scientific psychosocial terms, the cited studies just mentioned it cautiously, preferring to focus on the dimensions of local or internal 'cultural conflicts'. Therefore, several authors agreed that "a need for longitudinal

comparative studies from the entire Arctic with culturally relevant instruments addressing mental health in early childhood" was needed (Lehti et al., 2009). On the other hand, this explains why the suggested strategies to address suicides, violence, and substance abuse in Greenland generally failed. In fact, these accounted only for the development of the health sector (see Bjerregaard, 2005) without questioning the political-economic situation. Anyway, these studies also focused on comparing the correlation between substance abuse, infectious diseases, and criminality with suicidal behaviour, laying the bases for adequate cross-sectoral and comparative studies (Corliss et al., 2009; Large, Smith and Nielssen, 2009). Relevant is also the attention given to the initiatives of subnational organisations, such as the abovementioned Nordic Council for Arctic Medical Research and the Inuit Circumpolar Council, whose operations were crucial in conjugating questions of public health with broader indigenous and human rights (Krümmel, 2009).

In the past decade, health studies have focused on three main objectives: gathering the most recent data and building cross-temporal analyses; reviewing and recommending prevention strategies; and broadening perspectives on the causes of the phenomenon and its effects on specific groups. Time and regional trends show that Greenland has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, with an average rate of 96 suicides per 100,000 people annually (Bjerregaard and Larsen, 2015; Jentz et al., 2022; Radford et al., 2021; Sargeant, Forsyth and Pitman, 2018; Sørensen et al., 2022). The latest study demonstrates how the rate slowly declined after the peak reached in the 1980s, but the high values call for proper assessments and prevention campaigns (Seidler et al., 2023). Overall, these studies employed regression or mediation models based on official data, as in previous publications. Time-focused studies were particularly useful to demonstrate the impact of seasonality: because indigenous people had specific seasons of birth that helped in coping with the harsh arctic environment, the rapid modernization negatively impacted the human-nature symbiosis, and

Björkstén and Bjerregaard (2015) demonstrated how people born in the traditional lifestyle's months were much less likely to commit suicide.

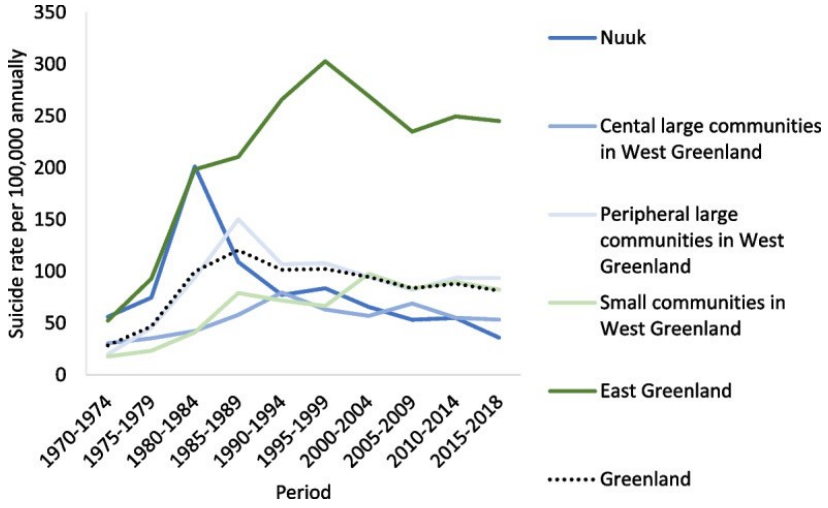

Fig. 5: Period- and region-specific suicide rates in Greenland (Seidler et al., 2023: 6).

Prevention strategies and allocated resources have been largely evaluated as poor (Viskum and Larsen, 2015). Hence, further studies suggested the adoption of community-based and culturally guided interventions and evaluations (Redvers et al., 2015) to adjust psychiatric guidance to autochthonous individuals' needs (Charlier et al., 2017). Critical is also the study by Grundsøe and Pedersen (2019), which demonstrated how two thirds of the suicide victims who occurred between 2012 and 2015 had no contact with the health care system, showing how vital it is to intervene in suicide ideation and suicide attempts. In this context, the psychological autopsy study run by Chachamovich et al. (2013), similar to that carried out by Thorslund (1990), appears to be particularly useful. The research consisted of a review of medical records and coroners' cases, cross-analysed with interviews with the subject's relatives about his or her life, aimed at providing a final psychiatric diagnosis.

Most importantly, this study encountered the need expressed by Greenlandic citizens and health professionals to share the research procedures, objectives, and results with the population, for the immediate and long-term therapeutic effects – namely indirect psychological support and increased connectedness. In fact, Flora (2012: 155), through her qualitative ethnographic approach, suggested that suicides among Greenlanders are surrounded by an aura of "uncertainty, ambiguity, stigma, and not least fascination", highlighting the gap between scholar knowledge and local awareness. Similarly, quantitative and qualitative analyses showed that social issues and adverse childhood experiences are the leading youth and young adults' suicide exposures (Bjerregaard and Larsen, 2018; Bloch, Drachmann and Pedersen, 2013; Bolliger and Gulis, 2018; Chen and Elklit, 2017; Karsberg, Armour and Elklit, 2014; Karsberg, Lasgaard and Elklit, 2012). More specifically, determining factors for suicidal thoughts are the lack of relationships, suicide of friends, rural living, substance abuse, and social exclusion (Affleck et al., 2021; Flora, 2019; Granheim et al., 2021). Therefore, further studies on depression and anxiety are necessary (Olano and Rasmussen, 2019). Other observed issues were gambling (Larsen, Curtis and Bjerregaard, 2012), alcohol abuse, and violence (Nexøe et al., 2012), and the effects of climate change (Williams, Hill and Spicer, 2015; Knudsen et al., 2017), also defined as 'anthropogenic climate change' (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2014). Arguably, the most relevant contribution is the assumption that climate change and mental health issues are connected through the "complex history of colonialism, related intergenerational traumas, and increasing industrial development" (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2014: 179).

Overall, the number of studies and the diversity of approaches demonstrate heightened interest and concern about the high rate of suicides in Greenland. Many of the cited publications offer nuanced understandings of the issue, linking it to economic development, cultural barriers, intergenerational violence, and climate change. Still, all this data must be employed mindfully in other studies because it has been demonstrated that in many cases, the true cause

of death registered in Greenland is often unknown (Iburg, Mikkelsen and Richards, 2019). This might alter the number of suicides, especially in the cases of medicine-induced suicide attempts (Bloch, Drachmann and Pedersen, 2013), and other forms of violent death. Contextually, the difficulties of the public health system to constantly reach all Greenlandic communities, make it even more difficult to determine the true demographic extension of intergenerational traumas, the understanding of which heavily relies on qualitative surveys and psychological autopsies. Furthermore, other factors such as industrialization and climate change are causally linked to the suicides only at the speculative level. Ultimately, the several dimensions of the phenomenon of suicides and intergenerational violence in Greenland are connected not by causal explanations but by an attentive reflection on the intervening factors that alter the livelihood of people and potentially increase the likelihood of suicides. Still, these studies agree that there are substantial gaps in the prevention strategies and a general lack of political engagement, perhaps indicating that the effective explanation and prevention of these phenomena should be inherently political.

In this respect, journal articles offer further points for reflection. Bianco (2021) stated that after the political elections in 2021, the main challenge of the new government was to "face its demons of deeply rooted violence", specifically referring to intergenerational violence and household abuse. Interestingly, the author concludes her brief article by highlighting that "the popular sentiment on Facebook is filled with a desire for a national action plan on violence in Greenland", demonstrating the lack of a coordinated intervention at the national level. Increasing funding and human resources have been allocated in the past to local municipalities to prevent suicide cases and address abuses, but the lack of clear administrative leadership hampered any past initiatives (Holm, 2017; Turnowsy, 2017). With the youth being the most vulnerable group of people and at the same time the key to addressing intergenerational traumas, the population and researchers generally agree that the best approach is to foster "a strong cultural identity and close relationships

with older generations" (Philbert, 2022). Other articles narrate different personal experiences, which eventually present similar patterns: an unaddressed trauma deriving from certain sociocultural conditions that results in death (Hersher, 2016; Moshiri, 2010). Karijord (2017) stated that the key, especially in small communities, is to intervene and try to break the triangle of social poverty, violence, and substance abuse. Accordingly, activists started to claim the need for a "mental decolonization," addressing the deconstruction of informal power (Andersen and Krebs, 2020). These interviews highlight the same conclusions reached by academic researchers: the current violent phenomena in Greenland require a multidimensional, nation-wide programme that addresses abuse and mental health. Still, this is not possible without a proper reflection on Greenland's postcolonial status and emerging challenges.

National and International Politics

The politological literature about Greenland oscillates between realist approaches focused on the architectures of international politics and critical approaches concerned with Greenlandic-Danish relations and the history and livelihood of the local population. Realism dominated the study of the island until the 1980s, and it still constitutes one of the main approaches adopted, while after the Second World War, Greenland's modernization and exposure to global decolonization movements brought increasingly diverse scholar views. The progressive autonomy granted by Denmark produced an evolving juridical-political situation, which constituted the main focus and was studied through a variety of theoretical assumptions. Only quite recently have a few publications linked modernization and Danification to the levels of violence among the Greenlandic population. Accordingly, most of the scholarly production is aimed at studying the emergence of new factors on the path towards independence, such as Chinese investments and climate change. The main underpinning in this case is the belief that a stronger distinction between Greenlandic and Danish

prerogatives in managing Greenlandic politics will translate into more attention given to the rights and status of the indigenous population since the Inuit constitute 88% of Greenlandic society (Cambou, 2020). Still, attention to the individual is not something that comes with a major role given to the local jurisdiction, as noted by some authors, according to whom some of modern Greenland's issues are ascribable to the Greenlandic elite. Hence, a growing portion of the literature in political science, as experienced in the sociological field, represents the Greenlanders' efforts to become protagonists of the narratives around their identity, history, and sociopolitical challenges. As a methodology, most of the research employs historiographic or ethnographic discourse analysis through the review of official governmental documents in Greenland, Denmark, the US, and other countries and international organisations, sometimes comparing Greenland with other cases within the Arctic region or the broader field of postcolonial literature. In the following paragraphs, international and national politics are addressed simultaneously because these two dimensions are deeply intertwined in their effects on and the political-economic development of the local population.

Greenland's politics were first approached in the modern academic literature because of the dispute between Denmark and Norway over the contested sovereignty over Eastern Greenland (Berlin, 1933; Federspiel and Karl Knudsen, 1932; Hyde, 1933; Knaplund, 1925; Morgenstierne, 1931; Preuss et al., 1933; Preuss, 1932) and the Greenland Agreement between the US and the Danish consul to protect the island from Nazi expansion (Briggs, 1941). Simultaneously, public attention was given to the strategic value of Greenland and other arctic territories to American and European national security. While recognising the threat posed by the potential conquest of Greenland by Germany, the Americans also noted the modest economic interests over that territory, mainly resting on the possibility of controlling maritime and air routes (Mosely, 1940; Routh, 1946). Nonetheless, the sudden attention towards the Arctic imposed by the war was laying the foundations for political

developments beyond military interests (Roucek, 1951; Weigert, 1944), although Greenland was already considered to be part of the 'Monroe Doctrine'[9] (Teal, 1952). During the Cold War, the US established refuelling and missile bases to control the so-called Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom gap (GIUK gap) in the Atlantic Ocean and deter the Soviet Union, while the exploitation of natural resources was limited (Archer, 1988; Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2020; Teal, 1952). These activities posed threats to the environment, individuals, and Greenlandic identity, as part of the broader Danish attempt at exploiting the island for strategic interests (Andersen, 2019; Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2020). Greenland has always been fundamental to Denmark's international standing, which therefore depends on US cooperation. As a result, the sovereignty of Greenland was fluid and partially unclear, as the island was a territory undergoing a decolonization process while de facto being managed through tacit understandings between Washington and Copenhagen (Andersen, 2019; Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2020). This process was reinforced by the modernising reforms, which made Greenland "economically more dependent on Denmark than ever" (Petersen, 2016: 121), preventing the initiation of an effective independence process (Beukel, 2010). Overall, in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, Danish policies were praised as a form of liberal colonialism aimed at protecting local culture, laying the bases for technological innovation, and ensuring the democratic administration of the island.

In fact, Danish reforms in the 1950s-60s were viewed on the mainland as strengthening the Greenlandic economy, therefore granting the Inuit a better future on a par with American and European standards (Petersen, 2016). The great majority of the publications are ambivalent towards the Danish rule in that period, recognising the several economic-technological inputs while criticising what were avoidable detrimental psychosocial costs (Stenbaek, 1987). The

[9] The Monroe Doctrine is a concept of foreign policy developed by the 5th president of the US, James Monroe, based on the assumption that the American continent had to be under the US sphere of influence, and any form of inference by other powers was a threat to the national security (see May, 1975).

modernization process was theoretically aimed at granting economic self-sustainability, and therefore was supported by parts of the Greenlandic elite (Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2020). Only later was this approach viewed as a threat to the Greenlandic identity (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009; Thisted, 2015), meant only to bring the wealth back to the 'metropolis' (Grydehoj, 2016). Indeed, by incorporating Greenland as a county in 1953, Greenlanders were denied the rights of colonial peoples to permanent sovereignty over their own resources (Johnstone, 2020). Passing rapidly from an economy of subsistence, essentially based on resource sharing, to individual profit-focused industries (in the fishery and mining sectors), Greenlanders experienced the fragmentation of families and the marginalisation of the role of women while being exposed to the fluctuations of international trade (Hamilton et al., 1996; Langgård, 1986). Later, the introduction of a neoliberal fishing regime based on individual transferable quotas brought many fishermen to abandon the profession because it became economically unfeasible (Søbye, 2019). These reforms suddenly altered the communities organised around common resources, breaking them into small, familiar nucleuses based on the idea of private property (Sejersen, 2022). Most notably, the Danes sustained seal and whale hunting while limiting other traditions such as meat sharing within the community with Western-type good exchange (Rud, 2017). Concurrently, Denmark adopted several reforms to increase the economic efficiency of productive activities and to entice some Danes to settle in Greenland. The G-60 bill, a ten-year plan for social and economic development, led to the centralization of settlements and outposts into larger towns to centralise social and health services (Holm et al., 2015).

With time, the Greenlanders became increasingly convinced that material progress was possible even without strict Danish rule. This growing self-confidence led to the negotiation of two referenda in 1979 and 1982, which resulted, respectively, in the Home Rule and the withdrawal from the European Economic Community (Heinrich, 2018; Stenbaek, 1987). Still, the autonomy involved only the administration of health and education, while the economy

was still under Danish control (Grydehøj, 2020). This regulatory system was compensated via an annual block grant aimed at financing the new Greenlandic administration (Nuttal, 2009). Nonetheless, this system never allowed the proper development of Greenlandic political initiatives. A progressive resurgence of independence claims resulted in a new referendum in 2009. The latter led Denmark to adopt the Self-Government Act, in which the block grant was fixed to the value of 3.6 billion Danish kroner (483,7 million euros), as the Greenland authorities received the possibility to profit from all economic resources present on the island (Grydehøj, 2020). Today, the block grant still represents 25% of Greenland's GDP, while a great portion of the public administration and the economy relies on Danish-imported skilled labour (Grydehøj, 2020). Hence, the autonomy allows the Greenlanders to manage their domestic affairs, which nonetheless heavily depend on Danish-inspired approaches and solutions. Instead, authentic Greenlandic leadership is present in sub-national cooperation initiatives. Since the 1960s, Greenlanders have led diplomatic contacts among the Arctic people and the Arctic states' representatives around scientific, political, economic, and health issues (Jacobsen and Gad, 2018; Loukacheva, 2007). These initiatives have been interpreted as a clear demonstration of the will to independence (Stenbaek, 1987), exteriorized through the leveraging of "paradiplomatic" external relations to maximise self-determination efforts (Gerhardt, 2011; Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017). Greenland also sought to interact with the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) to sustain the legitimacy of its political claims.

Between the Home Rule and the Self-government, Danish colonialism changed its morphology from the orthodox control of Greenlandic governance to the control of its economic-cultural structures (Petersen, 2016). Therefore, in the past twenty years, Greenlanders have focused mainly on reconciling with their past, attempting to decolonize their own identity, and acknowledging the risks of disentangling themselves from Danish economic sustenance. This

fundamental contradiction is often approached in the literature through the analysis of the Reconciliation Commission established in 2013 by the then Greenlandic prime minister Aleqa Hammond. The idea of reconciliation has existed in Greenland since the 1990s, inspired by similar experiences worldwide – namely in Canada, Australia, and South Africa (Andersen, 2020). The need for reconciliation came from the perceived importance of including emotions in the analysis of political processes (Thisted, 2017). Still, the proposal was met with objection because the Danes always stressed out that their rule was never violent and they did not have anything to be 'shamed' of (Thisted, 2017), while a great portion of Greenlanders believed that the annual grant could be invested in more stringent issues (Marcussen-Mølgaard, 2020). As Denmark refused to participate, the Commission became a process to reconcile with the past rather than reconciling two parties (McLisky, 2021: 277), functioning more as a national identity-building attempt (Zinna, 2016).

The unresolved understandings between Greenland and Denmark are the bases of persistent issues also in Greenland's foreign policy: US interests, the growing presence of China, and the looming shadow of Russia constitute crucial security issues in a territory characterised by unclear jurisdiction. One of the most important objectives for the Greenlandic government is the development of infrastructure across the island. In recent times, specific projects have attracted Chinese investments, exacerbating tensions and concerns in Denmark and the US (Grydehoj, 2016). Generally, scholars avoided the positive/negative dialectic in analysing the US-China confrontation in the Arctic, focusing instead on the (re)actions of Greenland and the effects on the local population. Accordingly, some argue that although attracting new investments may help solve the fiscal challenges facing the Greenlandic government, more activity will also lead to new environmental, societal, and individual security problems (Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017). On one side, Denmark and the US warn that the Chinese presence risks making an autonomous Greenland a 'vassal' state of an illiberal power – an idea backed by some authors as well

(Jakobsson, 2018). Still, a case-by-case review of Chinese interests in Greenland and other Arctic territories finds that the dominant narrative in Western countries is misleading (Boersma and Foley, 2014; Foley, 2018). Also, any potential disequilibrium caused by Chinese economic activities in Greenland will most likely be compensated by the military power of the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO): Greenland is lacking its own army, and it will probably look for American and European support when the time comes to create one (Ackrén and Jakobsen, 2015). Nonetheless, a popular opinion among scholars and security practitioners is based on the idea that Western strategic interests in Greenland should not involve military means, making potential NATO membership problematic (Exner-Pirot, 2020; Jørgensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2009; Rasmussen, 2013). Moreover, the problem of Arctic militarization is necessarily framed within the conflict between Russia and the West, now centred in Ukraine. Bertelsen (2020: 65) argues that "the Arctic may become an area of Russian–Western conflict, but that will only occur if the conflict elsewhere escalates to a level which forces both sides to use the Arctic in the conflict, or if either side decides to move towards an overall conflict and competition in the Arctic area."

These misunderstandings are primarily provoked by undefined questions of internal jurisdiction around the strategic and economic potential of Greenlandic resources. Baldacchino (2010) defined Greenland as a case of "creative jurisdiction", in which the governance of the territory depends on external powers, which then get in exchange the assurance of projecting their strategic interests there. Resource exploitation is thus inevitably connected with the abovementioned dilemmas around the effectiveness of the block grant and future modernization reforms. The Greenlandic administrations have been developing new urban plans to increase centralization and attract foreign investments, but in this frame, Danish resources are still seen as a limitation for future independence (Grydehøj, 2018). Furthermore, centralization programmes are welcomed by Greenlanders already living in (relatively) big cities, while

these are opposed by those living at the peripheries (Grydehøj, 2018), and urbanisation is still perceived by many as a form of forced Danification (Grydehøj, 2016). Contextually, the endless debate on whether to prioritise English as the second language over Danish keeps occupying a major role in the internal political debate (Grydehøj, 2020). While being mindful of avoiding embarking on a centre-periphery dialectic, these dilemmas show that some social traumas must be addressed to avoid history repeating itself. In this case, it emerges that the right to self-determination is the right to determine how the Greenlanders will balance conflicting internal and external objectives and measures with a variety of actors (Beukel, 2010: 64; see also Olsvig, 2022). Hence, Greenland pursues two short-to-medium-term goals: carving out as much autonomy as possible without losing the block grant and attracting foreign investments to strengthen its ailing finances (Rahbek-Clemmensen 2020). In May 2023, Greenland's government presented its first draft constitution to its parliament (Reuters, 2023), and in the past few years, the Danish government has also started to apologise for the social-anthropological experiments run between the 1950s-70s (Agence France-Presse, 2022). While the need for reconciliation keeps being mentioned by other external actors (UN News, 2023), the recent political improvements seem to allow more space for the resolution of the Greenlandic dilemmas and the island's sustainable development. Rahbek-Clemmensen (2018) argues that Greenland and the Arctic are, by now, a matter of foreign policy for Denmark, ideally facilitating Greenlandic independence but preventing reconciliation efforts. Finally, all these considerations are surrounded by a high level of uncertainty, considering the growing interests of international actors in Greenland (Weber, 2020). Grydehoj (2018) suggests that the solution may reside in micro-level approaches, leaving aside transatlantic airports and urban expansion projects and favouring the stabilisation of Greenlandic society. In fact, a report published in 2014 by the "Committee for Greenlandic Mineral Resources for the Benefit of Society" concluded that raw material extraction is important for Greenland, although "it is seen as unrealistic

that such activity can give sufficient yield for the Greenland economy to be wholly independent" (Taagholt and Brooks, 2016: 369; see also Wilson, 2017).

Overall, there are visible shifts in the theoretical approaches towards Greenland. The realist positions generally provide the most valid arguments for explaining global politics and the Greenlandic paradiplomacy, although they are deficient in explaining the complex nature of Greenlandic-Danish relations. Over time, the analyses became more critical about the manipulative nature of liberal policies aimed at coaxing Greenlanders into producing as much as possible for the sole Danish benefit. Many of the cited publications call for deeper analyses of Greenland's international relations and the effects of its paradiplomacy on internal questions. Accordingly, a better grasp of Greenland's international role will perhaps facilitate the understanding of its internal conflicting identities. This must necessarily be preceded by a re-imagination of the Greenland identity to resolve, accept, and deconstruct the narratives originating from Danish colonialism. Many call for sustained input from Greenlanders in the knowledge production process, which will sustain, in the medium-long run, the effective independence from Denmark. Still, any form of Greenlandic development without the important role played by Denmark is unrealistic. As suggested by Hardt (2018: 78) "a tangible improvement would be changing Danish perceptions of the block grant from being a charitable donation to being an investment". Some also suggest independent investigations by the Greenlandic government into the abuses implemented by Danish policies after the Second World War (Minton and Thiesen, 2022) to facilitate the success of a new Reconciliation Commission and assure Danish participation in it. As noted by Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg (2017), many diplomatic actions adopted by the Arctic states in the past 20 years were aimed at de-securitizing the region, transmitting the idea of easing inter-state relations, and attracting investments. Still, these authors claim that such approaches have made other controversies emerge and remain unaddressed. Without defining the rupture elements that caused disruptive social phenomena with uncontrolled external intervention,

any speculation on the future of Greenland's national and international politics is dangerously limited.

Other Approaches to the Arctic

As seen above, the peculiar juridical-economic conditions of Greenland and its exposure to inter-state strategic confrontation are at the core of scholarly and political debates. Before deepening the theoretical frame proposed here, other approaches previously applied to the Arctic are explored. The latest publications vary between a focus on governance, based on the idea that the main issues facing the Arctic reside in the structures of power that rule the Arctic states, and security, assuming that the Arctic region is confronting a period of expanding crisis.

The concept of "biopolitics" proposed by Reid (2022) argues that the interventions to manage the indigenous communities are structured to show "care" and build "hopeful subjects" whose orientation to the future is secure and not dangerous to the political power. Framed as such, Western solutions to the Arctic suicides are constructed even before addressing underlying issues. Similarly, Russel (2022) talks about neoliberal governmentality, a concept that explains the economic logic of the policies adopted in the context of sustainable development. Generally, the authors agree that traditional geopolitics must evolve into "critical" geopolitics in order to explain the complex and evolving Arctic region and structure proper strategies (Dodds, Woon and Xu, 2022). Likewise, the approaches of Arctic Security are not that different from these assumptions but develop further their studies by postulating that the Arctic is a "region in a crisis", in which "the future of regional cooperation is jeopardized" (Lindroth, Sinevaara-Niskanen and Tennberg , 2022b). While from the point of view of Classical Security Studies the Arctic is a relatively peaceful area, considering that it constitutes the longest direct border between NATO and Russia (see Fig. 6; Bertelsen, 2020; Padrtova, 2020), by adopting the lenses of

human security many issues arise (Chater, Greaves and Sarson, 2020). Accordingly, it is possible to really understand these issues by adopting a bottom-up human-centred approach, as represented by the indigenous and gender security theories (Kuokkanen, 2019; Kuokkanen and Sweet, 2020).

Still, from the previous sections, it emerges that the study of social issues in Greenland lacks a political approach, just as political and security analyses are limited in understanding the human dimension of national and international strategies. As stated by Kuokkanen and Sweet (2020: 86), "it is not possible to discuss security in Indigenous communities without addressing interpersonal physical and sexual violence." In fact, they continue, "without an intersectional approach, both the analysis and subsequent solutions remain inadequate". Probably because of the Covid pandemic, research and policy efforts stalled, still highlighting the necessity for a "comprehensive security" approach (Heininen, 2023). In particular, the fact that Arctic populations experienced peculiar and limited forms of violence prevented the application of the theories of violent conflicts at the academic level, thus limiting the possibilities around reconciliation and prevention efforts.

Fig. 6: Political map of the Arctic (Knecht, 2013).

Understanding Violence and Conflict

This chapter is a reflection on the current understandings of the concepts of violence, peace, and conflict, their interrelations, and the existing empirical and methodological gaps. The history of conflicts and the origins of violent behaviour are not addressed here (see Pinker, 2011), although the framework provided below might be employed from historical and comparative perspectives. Recently, public and academic attention towards peace and conflicts has increased sensibly, particularly in the various attempts at approving or criticising the existing theories of international relations, security, and violence. Realist and positivist approaches regained empirical substance with the war in Ukraine and the great powers confrontation in Africa and Asia, while other studies are interested in the growing relevance of climate change, the Artificial Intelligence, and future pandemics. In a period in which the doom of complete destruction – either because of environmental (Wallace-Wells, 2021), health (Stephen, 2021), technological (Cuthbertson, 2023), or military threats (Dupuy, 2023) – regained a strong presence in the public and scholar debate, we have the duty to rationally assess the means by which humans endanger the existence of the human species itself (see the concept of "Existential Risk Studies" in Taylor, 2023). Because of institutional entanglements between the major research centres and the governments' foreign policies, as well as sociological factors, the choice of empirical cases and methodologies in the literature on conflict studies is biased, impacting our knowledge of violent phenomena at the global and local levels (Brenner and Han, 2021). Simultaneously, peacebuilding strategies are still criticised for being too hierarchical and inflexible, requiring more holistic and systematic approaches (Bramsen, Poder and Waever, 2019; Chingono, 2016; Jacoby, 2008; Lederach, 1998; Nyheim, 2015; Reardon, 1988; Rhodes and Akram, 2022). These criticisms demonstrate that further studies and peace operations should properly integrate technical precision and field knowledge with a thorough

understanding of broader dimensions and trends in violent conflicts. Therefore, to understand peace and conflict in the contemporary world, one should observe their intersections through empirical and methodological diversification.

The Nature of Violent Conflicts

Conflict is inevitable and can have positive outcomes (Baron, 1991; Cosier and Dalton, 1990; Rahim, 2023). Therefore, peace is not the antithesis of conflict but the opposite of violence, while conflicts should be absorbed or transformed (Galtung, 1973; 1996). Violence originates from human interaction as a response to environmental conditions: resource scarcity and competition (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Mildner, Wodni and Lauster, 2011); perceptions (Salawu, 2010; Mundy, 2011; Shapiro and Iwry, 2022); inequality (Cohen and Karim, 2022; Stewart, 2011; 2016); weak governance (Dupont, Grabosky, and Shearing, 2003; Fearon, 2011; Patrick, 2011); and others (Coleman, Deutsch and Marcus, 2014; Wertheim, 2005). Violence is then shaped by contextual phenomena – religion (Cousar, Carnes and Kimel, 2021; Huang, 2019; Gopin, 1997); ethnicity (Duncan, 2019; Semir, 2019); and culture (Harland, 2010; Keenan, 2020), all revolving around the concepts of identity and ideology, therefore constituting a broad and intersectional field of study (Eller, 1999; Jeong, 2010; Maynard, 2019; Pearson, 2001; Zartman, 2019). In particular, physical societal violence is more likely to occur when a 'habitat' becomes unbearable for a group of people[10] (Charbonneau, 2022; Colletta and Cullen, 2000; Pons-Vignon and Lecomte, 2004). Arguably, a situation becomes unbearable when multiple of the abovementioned factors occur simultaneously,

[10] Habitat, differently from 'reality', 'situation', or 'status quo', indicates a specific environment where an organism can thrive (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Conceptually, it serves the idea that if an environment is not suitable for human life *because of human responsibilities*, there are a series of reflections and actions that must be addressed.

enacting the multidimensionality of violent conflicts (Black, 2014; Hirschberger et al., 2016; Schiff, 2020).

In any case, studies of conflict and violence serve the purpose of achieving peace. If a holistic definition of violence (physical and psychological, direct and structural) is commonly recognised, then peace is the absence of violence (Galtung, 1996). Therefore, because peace is an ideal condition, some kind of injustice or misery is always present (Jeong, 2017). The statement 'study peace to understand conflicts' becomes 'study a situation characterised by structural and non-physical violence to understand the overarching social phenomena defined as conflicts' (see also Acar, Moss and Uluğ, 2020). Hence, the study of peace entails tracing the ideal elements required to get as close as possible to a peaceful condition, or, in other words, to ameliorate social relations (Gledhill and Bright, 2019). Most importantly, peace is not a fixed condition but a process, and its catalysing elements are multidimensional themselves (Jeong, 2017). Therefore, peace encompasses the concept of security, which is fundamentally opposed to violence and the threat of violence. Thus, the study of security, instead of traditionally commencing by citing Sun Tzu (2009) or Thucydides (1910), might give more insights by including Cicero. The Latin philosopher and statesman from the I century BC, in his 'Tusculan Disputations', argued that the "*securitas*" reflects "a state of calm undisturbed by passions like fear, anger, and anxiety" and therefore, "without security, one is incapable" (Hamilton, 2013: 62). Indeed, the root of the Latin word *pax* (peace) comes from the fusion of two separate semantic nucleuses: one meaning "to plant"/"build", and one meaning "unify"/"join" (Lana, 1990). Essentially, the term 'peace' itself indicates the actions by which peace is realised. Therefore, as abovementioned, if the achievement of peace consists of a multidimensional amelioration of social relations, it entails the cessation of any form of violence through conflict transformation: a material and psychosocial resolution. To do so, the hybridity of violent conflicts requires creativity in both theoretical and practical approaches.

Reconceptualising Violent Conflicts: The Discrimination Diagram

The human habitat is formed by environmental conditions and contextual phenomena that push groups of individuals to use violence to reach specific objectives according to identifiable behavioural patterns. Thus, violence can assume many forms on the spectrum between the physical and the psychosocial. 'Psychosocial' brings together the concepts of psyche and society to indicate the inference of the collectivity on the individual psychology and vice versa, the atomic individual origin of the collectivity. Accordingly, there are four main domains and specifications of violent conflicts: their material and psychosocial implications, and their horizontal and vertical vectors. Horizontality and verticality depend on the relationship between two or more conflicting groups. They pose themselves as equal actors around their conflicting interests (Østby, 2010), or the conflictual relationship derives from the imposition of one group over the other, determining the asymmetrical – or vertical – relation (Stewart, 2011). Regardless of the dimensions and interrelations, a conflict between two or more groups is based on their willingness to discriminate against each other with respect to a series of economic or sociopolitical resources. In this sense, competing interests do not arise suddenly at a certain moment in history but develop from longstanding confrontations for the control of resources or the mechanisms through which resources are managed. Accordingly, violence erupts as a mixture of escalated scarcity and mistrust, fuelled by discriminatory practices. *Ab origine*, these practices are provoked by scarcity or fear of scarcity themselves: this is the nature of the so called 'cycles of conflicts' or 'cycles of violence'. Hence, the roots of violent conflicts can be summarised as 'a specific situation that, at a certain point, becomes unsustainable', regardless of actual or perceived reasons. Thus, a situation becomes unsustainable because of a mixture of *needs* and

perceptions[11]. These are two related elements that correspond to complex combinations of *resources* and *human interrelations*. Specifically, human relations exist with infinite possibilities for mixtures of resources and norms. Needs, perceptions, resources, and norms overlap, intersect, and influence each other between the physical and psychological dimensions, constituting the atomic experience of human life. Now, Security Studies and peace research should aim at identifying the conditions – the combinations of those four factors – that increase the likelihood of the breakout of violent conflicts. Nonetheless, it is not possible to adopt causal terms, as causality depends on the specific case and is always questionable (Giddens, 1984). Instead, the current goal is to identify patterns.

Needs and perceptions are neutral terms, and for these to cause suffering, there must be a 'negative' dimension – negative in terms of 'something lacking'. Negative needs come from the scarcity of resources or discrimination, i.e., depending on natural or imposed conditions. *Negative needs, caused by scarcity or discrimination, provoke negative perceptions*. Conversely, negative perceptions might provoke negative needs, as discrimination can be implemented even without scarcity. Or, in other words, *discrimination is originally enforced because of the fear of suffering scarcity in the future* – which is a negative perception (Barbier, 2015; Clark, 2002). For this reason, while human societies are not inherently physically violent (Jeong, 2017), their societal structures are tendentially inherently discriminatory. Because discrimination is implemented for the original purpose of survival, with the lack of proper checks and balances in a given jurisdiction, all societal systems inherit discriminatory practices – or tendencies – making them structural. This explains why *discrimination is a defining element of current societies*. Discrimination might be vehiculated according to different contextual phenomena (gender,

[11] These two concepts have been adequately analysed and defined in the past: for 'needs', see Avruch and Mitchell (2013), Burton (1990), and Kelman and Fisher (2016); for 'perceptions', see Dyrstad and Hillesund (2020), Jia (2022), and Wolfsfeld (2017).

ethnicity, religion, etc.), based on inter-group comparison that activates various danger-connoting stereotypes and prejudices (Schaller and Neuberg, 2008: 405). Finally, modern conflicts emerge because of material scarcity or because, at a certain moment, the discriminated group will perceive a discriminatory relation as unbearable (see the "Relative Deprivation Theory" in Runciman and Bagley, 1969; see also Bartusevicius, Henrikas, and van Leeuwen, 2022; Gurr, 2016).

Different territories and social systems around the world, with different social compositions and governance structures, are characterised by varying levels of resource scarcity and discrimination, the latter being determined by the social groups' features. As such, discrimination in the current global system is unavoidable; in other words, it is *systemic* and characterises social relations within and outside of state borders. More or less overtly, this is the principle on which great portions of social groups' narratives, traditions, and strategies are built: the discrimination of the other, especially the 'different', for each's own ontological security (Mitzen, 2006). In this sense, conflicts are inevitable. Then, if mismanaged, conflicts evolve into organised or planned physical violence. This conceptualization can be summarised in the Discrimination Diagram as follows:

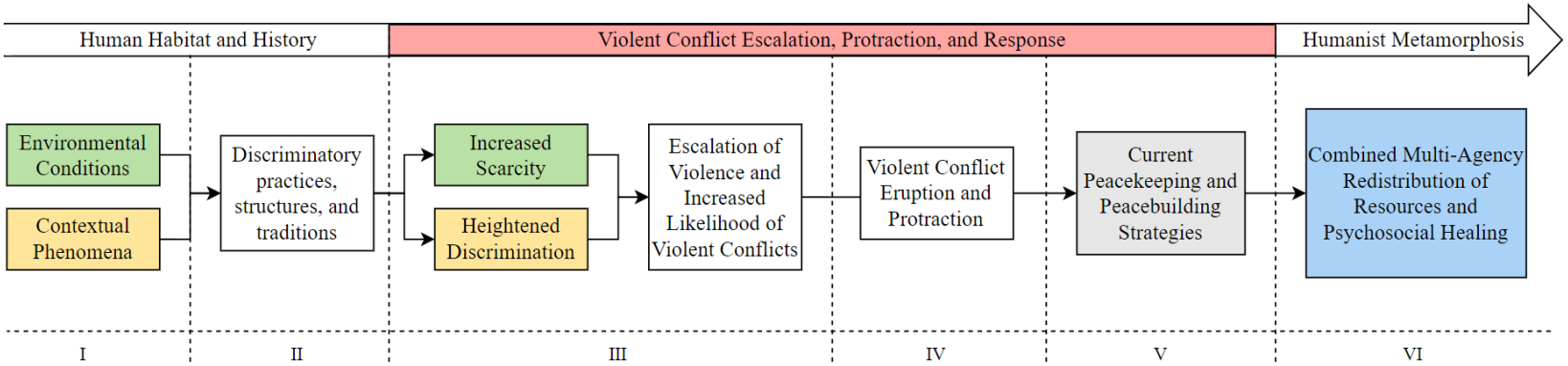

Fig 7: The Discrimination Diagram.

I. Across continents and time, the Human Habitat is composed of varying Environmental Conditions (broadly intended as the material conditions around an individual or a group) and Contextual Phenomena (being the psychosocial determinants of individual and group identities), which mutually influence each other.
II. Conflicts are part of human nature and stem from antagonistic needs and perceptions, which generate Discrimination Practices. In time, these practices become beliefs, traditions, and social structures, explicated both physically and psychosocially.
III. Worsening needs or perceptions trigger the Escalation of Violence in both the physical and psychosocial forms.
IV. When violence becomes systematically organised between two or more groups around a series of competing needs and perceptions, the discriminatory relationship becomes a Violent Conflict.
V. In the modern world, when a violent conflict erupts, a plethora of Conflict Resolution and Prevention Practices operate together, according to the relative geopolitical conditions.
VI. Addressing the profound roots and dimensions of discrimination lays the foundation for a structured resolution and the long-standing prevention of violent conflicts. Restructuring human relations as such would foster a 'humanist metamorphosis' of the contemporary world.

This framework categorises the constituting elements of the roots of violent conflicts in a pattern with a chronological perspective. It is not concerned with defining what specifically is a violent conflict or a war, the legitimacy of the conflicting actors, or the specific triggering and accelerating factors of violence, which all depend on specific cases. The colour coding has a purely explicative function, to distinguish the environment and human psyche, as well as endogenous and exogenous factors around the actors involved in a conflict. The final box (VI) represents a reconciliation of the two main

dimensions of conflict resolution and violence prevention: resources and traumas. The 'redistribution' and 'healing' strategies depend on the specific case. Each conflict requires its own specific assessment of the resources that must be redistributed and how the multi-generational traumas are rooted in the individual and communitarian consciences. With this framework being a general theorization, the concept of 'redistribution of resources' simply accounts for the rearrangement of the economy in a territory affected by a violent conflict, exactly because of the central role of the economic-strategic value of the territory in shaping the conflict itself. This conceptualization does not refer to a specific tradition of political economy or philosophy. To deepen the notion of 'redistribution of resources' beyond Marxist and socialist propositions, see the theories of distributism (Quinn, 1995), mutualism (Bronstein, 2015), and redistributionism (De Jouvenel, 2010). The concept could also be seen in Smithian terms, where a more equal society – with less discriminatory practices and more social mobility – is wealthier and more efficient (Walraevens, 2020). The broad framework proposed here must then be integrated with other specific tools of conflict assessment (OAS and UNDP, 2015), technologies for social listening (Centre for Human Dialogue, 2022), and economic indicators (EC, 2023), to deeply understand the mobilisation capacity of groups of people (Siroky et al., 2020). These will lead to an understanding of the conflict dimensions and the urgency of intervention (Poth, 2021).

One could say that, so far, the human habitat and relations have been characterised by cycles between phases I-II, with periodic breakouts of violent conflicts. Arguably, in most cases, a territory or social group is 'stuck' in cycles between phases I and V. The study and practice of peace should ideally aim at phase VI, to act on the economic and psychosocial foundations of insecurity. Arguably, this would increase the likelihood of the resolution and prevention of violent conflicts. In fact, with proper systematisation, it would be possible to understand the multidimensionality of fragile contexts and predict the likelihood of violent conflicts by investigating the non-physical and structural forms of

violence. Admitting this holistic understanding of violent conflict and psychophysical discrimination allows for a broader reflection on their prevention and the related early warning systems. Analytical instruments and quantitative studies that explain and attempt to predict violent behaviour exist, but these are limited to physical violence (see, for example, Swanström and Weissmann, 2005; United States Institute of Peace, 2008). The 'Escalation Curve' (EC) proposed here fills the gap in understanding how and when a conflict escalates by admitting its non-physical nature as the precondition for physical violence:

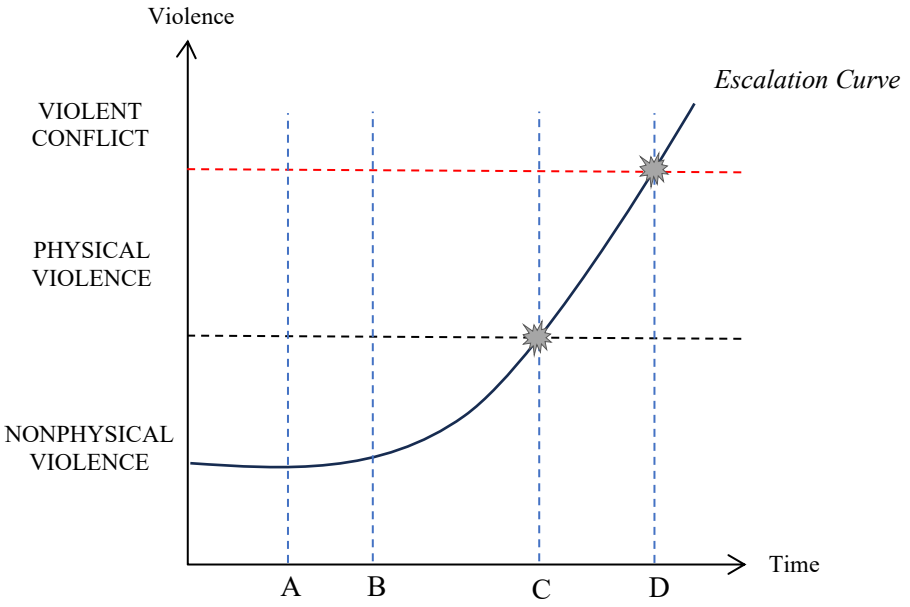

Fig. 8: The Escalation Curve in theory.

The letters on the abscissa represent increasingly violent events in terms of trauma, livelihood deterioration, damages, and casualties. The grey irregular dots, placed at the intersections between the EC and the different areas of violence categorization, are the "points of no return", after which violent conflicts and their effects become more complex and longstanding (see the

"Rubicon Theory" in Johnson and Tierney, 2011). Ideally, the evolution of violent conflicts is:

- A to B: forms of discrimination without broad physical violence (social exclusion, economic exploitation, repression, militarization, arms races, online hate speech, fake news, etc.).
- B to C: further discrimination and progressive escalation (riots, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, small scale clashes, proxy clashes, sabotage, etc.).
- C to D: violent conflict breakout

This curve is purely theoretical. To make it quantitative, more research efforts are needed to isolate the indicators and definitions of nonphysical violence, physical violence, and violent conflict and to cross these labels with real events and phenomena. This model would allow the development of more structured comparative and cross-temporal studies, permitting, to some extent, statistical prediction on what increases the likelihood of violence (Cederman and Weidmann, 2017; Sobotie and Cliford, 2018; Weidmann and Ward, 2010). Eventually, according to the selected timeframe, the EC will appear as follows:

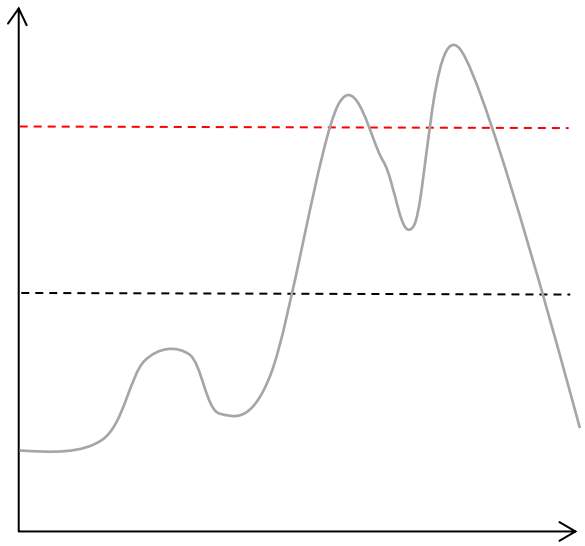

Fig. 9: A potential example of the Escalation Curve in practice.

Therefore, studying conflicts means understanding the physical-nonphysical and violence-nonviolence dialectics in all their manifestations. Subsequently (logically and in time), why, how, and when people exert violence are yet to be determined. The EC illustrates a series of phenomena, laying the groundwork for case-specific causal reflections. Aiming at resolving conflicts entails addressing any form of discrimination. The strategic evolution of the peacekeeping and peacebuilding fields, as mentioned at the beginning, requires a broadening of visions and methods. For example, looking at non-physical violence to predict physical violence might require an investigation of the satisfaction of the political system in a country to measure grievances, social tensions, and other forms of interpersonal and inter-group contentiousness (Griffin, Kiewiet de Jonge and Velasco-Guachalla, 2020). At the same time, the external influences and economic interests surrounding the latter must be assessed. To resume Cicero, building without unifying and, inversely, unifying without building do not tackle the systemic issues of violent conflicts. This has a dual implication: first, the responsibility of societal violent phenomena largely depends on who manages and influences the resources and the channels through which groups of people interact at the global level, and secondly, the success of conflict resolution and peacebuilding inevitably depend on multi-agency approaches that can count on diversified resources (see also Tseer, Musah and Avogo, 2023). In conclusion, conflicts are inevitable and complex. To catalyse the factors that push and sustain violence, strategic interests should be directed to match – or at least not collide with – social needs (see also Pettman, 2005). A strategic-social rapprochement necessarily depends on mechanisms apt for redistributing resources among the population. At the same time, societal traumas must be addressed by tailored psychosocial healing campaigns and projects. Hence, applying the presented conceptualization with the relevant models encourages researchers and professionals to seek the *quid pluris* of a conflict, to develop effective resolutions, or to prevent the potential violent drift of critical situations.

On Discrimination

This chapter is a re-construction of the theorization of violent conflicts, which places the concept of discrimination as its core element[12]. The correlation between discrimination and violent conflicts has been investigated in the past (Babbitt, n.d.; Baechler, 1998; Basedau et al., 2015; Ellina and Moore, 1990), but with a narrow understanding of discrimination itself (see Caprioli and Trumbore, 2003; Goodhand, 2003; Gurr, 1993; Han, 2010; Han, O'Mahoney and Paik, 2013). Indeed, discrimination is mainly considered a question of social psychology and political philosophy (Bohren, Hull and Imas, 2023; Fibbi, Midtbøen and Simon, 2021; Melchior, 2021; Guimond, 2023). Hence, when applied to violent conflicts, it draws inspiration from sociological and economic theories – see the Theory of Change (CTC, 2023) and the Degrowth Theory (Daly, 1996) – that have been recently and only partially integrated into peacebuilding practices (SeeD, 2017). These factors, explaining and influencing human actions, are undoubtedly at the very base of violent conflicts. Socioeconomic discrimination as a form of coercive monopoly is considered by many influential historians and sociologists to be the basis of the insurgence of Asian empires, pre-Columbian reigns in central America, and the first European capitalist representative democracies (Harris, 1978). Indeed, the monopoly of power is the source of conflict, intended both as a defence of one's own resources and as an attempt at enlarging them. As mentioned above, explicitly utilising the term discrimination means accepting the fact that social groups – both within and across states – adopt practices and lifestyles aimed at maximising their ontological security, composed of different mixtures of physical, cultural, and psychological elements. Rather than rational, individuals

[12] Theories are formed in the mould of global and interpersonal trajectories of cultural and ethnic discrimination (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Hence, reformulating theories means also attempting to de-structuring discriminatory power relations, even in the phase of knowledge production, that still characterise international relations and the (non)resolution of violent conflicts (Gavino et al., 2020). Eventually, the dialogical approach embodies a reflective and transformative praxis, endorsing the decolonization of social sciences (Thambinathan and Kinsella, 2021) and the development of indigenous methodologies (Kovach, 2021).

and social groups are logical in their actions: they are systematic in handling social relations, even if this implies exercising violence. Although it is empirically (and morally) wrong to state a priori that social groups are discriminatory per se, this assumption is based on a series of philosophical, historiographic, and sociological reflections cited here and on historically detected patterns. In the minds of the discriminant and the discriminated, the core objective is the ownership of the mechanisms through which political and economic resources are controlled. This does not imply that human interactions will always be, nor have they always been, characterised by discriminatory practices, but it appears to be the dominant social behaviour. Hence, studying the remote and recent past, focusing on 'what went wrong', might increase awareness of 'what should be done', especially in the face of rapid technological and environmental evolutions. Without this retroactive and forward-looking exercise, history is doomed to repeat itself. In fact, as Harris (1978: 179), stated:

> "I do not believe that we are threatened by despotic traditions that have acquired a life of their own and that are transferred from one mode of production to another or from one system to another [... but] when certain types of state systems of production undergo a process of intensification, despotic forms of government can arise that are capable of neutralising human will and intelligence for thousands of years."

This brings us to another question: if social structures are systemically discriminatory, can they be de-structured without destruction? Some authors assume that only violence can end violence for peace's sake (see Fanon, 1961). In anthropological terms, violence is necessary to subvert the norms and break free from the shackles of convention and orthodoxy (Bergin and Westwood, 2003), a discourse that can be applied both at the psychological and sociological levels. Violence then becomes the required expression of material and psychosociological needs. Nonetheless, violence is still the fundamental

language of human self-centrism and the need for “more having” (Bin-Kapela, 2022). The recognition of the political therapeutic role of violence alongside its productivity of cyclical traumas is a fundamental theoretical development to acknowledge how some of the violent actions resulted from collective stress and diverted the explosive capacity of mobilised masses towards a re-establishment of elitist politics instead of a reformulation of the social tissue and the social contract (see also Addison and Murshed, 2006). Therefore, the argument goes back to the first sentences of this chapter: peace is the opposite of violence, and conflicts must be absorbed in non-violent ways.

In this sense, the phenomena of suicides and intergenerational trauma in Greenland are critical manifestations of nonphysical violent trends, i.e., of discriminatory practices and structures. The island suffered similar, yet unique, strategies of colonisation as other territories around the world. It goes without saying that colonialism is one of the most typical and studied forms of inter-group discrimination, coupled with many longstanding expressions of violence. Indeed, Greenland has the potential to become a participatory sociopolitical experiment in which the current discriminatory structures are addressed and decolonized once and for all.

Violent Trends and Conflictual Dimensions in Greenland

By examining the discriminatory practices experienced by the Inuit, it is possible to explain the trends in suicides and small-scale violence in Greenland. In particular, these are analysed in light of the environmental conditions and contextual phenomena at the national and international levels. Accordingly, the case of Greenland contributes extensively to the proposed theoretical framework by proving that: (1) rapidly growing strategic interests enhanced uncontrolled discriminatory practices in Greenland; (2) the progressive redistribution of resources through a broadening autonomy prevented harsher and broader forms of violence; and (3) the current levels of suicides and difficulties in determining a proper Greenlandic international identity require a psychosocial resolution. It demonstrates that a territory can be perceived as peaceful in traditional terms while the local population is worn out by traumas and other violent phenomena. In Greenland, these phenomena are studied but lack political awareness because of limited perceptions, discourses, and policies. Firstly, there is the diplomatic taboo in the relations between Greenland and Denmark, with the latter insisting on its positive role in the island's history. Secondly, there is also a societal taboo in which suicides and abuses are still considered minor health issues by a great portion of the population. These are both fostered by an international culture that gaslights the individual into bearing the effects of broader strategic decisions for the sole purpose of generating wealth and institutional security. For this reason, bridging the lack of political awareness about the Greenlandic-Danish conundrum and violent phenomena is fundamental to preventing further escalation in suicide rates. In fact, long before that physical violence rises, specific strategic choices of political or economic nature made by those actors who have the resources and the control of functioning structures of power must be investigated. Most importantly, these considerations should guide any political-strategic approach

towards Greenlandic independence, resources, and external relations in the future. Even if not properly conflictual, the situation in Greenland risks becoming increasingly critical, where the questions around identity, politics, and economy are stuck in gear. These interpretations are backed by the information and data gathered in the Historical Background, Literature Review, and Theoretical Framework. Still, this discussion stands at the qualitative level, laying the ontological foundation for further innovative research on Greenland.

Systemic Discrimination and Violence in Greenland

Greenland has always been characterised by a low density of population and a hostile environment for non-Inuit human activities, but environmental conditions are likely to change rapidly because of global warming. 81% of Greenland is covered by ice, and the total population is just about 57,000, the world´s lowest population density (Statistics Greenland, 2022). Other contextual phenomena are the human social structures: the Greenlandic culture and society, the Danish culture, the ethnic-cultural mixture between the two, colonial and postcolonial political institutions, and foreign powers. In this evolving context, the actors encountered increasingly conflicting interests, which were partially absorbed by Danish policies. Anyway, until the Second World War, Danish colonialism was aimed at securing resources in line with inter-European state competition by adopting discriminatory practices. The latter were, namely, forced Christianization and the Danish self-granted monopoly over the commerce of fishery and hunting resources. The colonial approach to relating to the Inuit was centred on the narratives that represented them as ‘blameless noble savages’, who had to be educated according to the “white man’s great responsibility” (Rasmussen, 1926: 126). Hence, before the Second World War, a social contract was tacitly signed in Greenland, where the Danes could profit from local resources while preserving the Inuit lifestyle. Apart from the cultural aspect, which was not negative per se, the Danes,

because of their technological superiority, commenced a unilateral management of Greenland aimed at exploiting local resources. The Greenlanders were not contrary to the European presence, as their livelihoods were apparently not affected by it, apart from a limited intermingling of language and customs. As explained below, the cultural-identitarian dimension of Greenlandic-Danish relations constituted a fragility only as a result of post-Second World War colonial policies.

The main issue is that this system was not implemented by the Danes in *bona fide*, but for the sole purpose of maximising the exploitation of Greenlandic resources. Opening the economy to some form of private enterprise was discussed several times in the 19th century, but the deliberations always concluded that this would be damaging for Greenlanders (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 17). Moreover, to implement the status quo in the face of increasing complexity in Danish-Greenlandic relations, the Danes started to engage with the local population by granting some form of self-government while pushing for the establishment of bigger settlements. In 1857, the Royal Inspector of South Greenland, Hinrich J. Rink, recognised that "the problems facing Greenlanders were in major part attributable to the loss of traditional lifestyle and culture and thus initiated a restoration programme" that established local municipal councils that involved the participation of Greenlandic representatives (McLisky, 2021: 271). In 1861, Rink founded the first Greenlandic newspaper, *Atuagagdliutit*, which "played an intrinsic role in nation-building during the period between the 1860s and 1920s (Langgård, 1998, cited in McLisky, 2021: 271), marking the commencement of limited local self-governance in Greenland (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 14). Therefore, the first 250 years of Danish rule in Greenland were overall peaceful in physical and psychosocial terms because of environmental conditions and, partially, contextual phenomena. Denmark probably did not have enough resources to exert a substantial military presence in Greenland. Most importantly, it would have been superfluous, given the low population density

and the fact that neither the Inuit nor other nations represent a danger to their interests there. Moreover, Greenland had not much to offer in terms of resource exploitation because of the technologies available during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Clearly, Greenlanders and Danes did not have the motives to fight each other, as their relationship was mutually commercial. Another particularity is that environmental conditions in Greenland always limited human interactions across millennia, so that Greenlanders did not have any knowledge or culture of war, as it was understood by Europeans, that could be exerted against the coloniser. After all, in that period, the Greenlanders kept the same lifestyle while adapting to the presence of new people, who wanted to exploit the same resources as them. But this relationship was, to some extent, regulated. Now, the true conditions in which this relationship was run, or whether the Inuit and the Danish settlers were aware of what was happening in sociopolitical terms, is impossible to determine. Indeed, awareness of the present is ontologically inexistent: we know things only after they happen. This is valid in philosophical as well as sociopolitical terms: we can only speculate on what the true intentions, aspirations, and values of the Danes and the Greenlanders were during that period. Thus, because of the Danish rule, summed to the harshness of the territory and the distance from usual trade routes, Greenland remained isolated between 19th and the 20th centuries.

The opening of the island to the rest of the world during the Second World War and the material progress that took place in Greenland had complex consequences (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 32). The increased contacts between different regions of Greenland and their exposure to international actors made Greenlandic national self-awareness grow. The traditional Danish policy of persistently emphasising the need for protection and the paternalistic focus on what was "for their own good", was no longer feasible (Beukel, Jensen, and Rytter, 2009: 32), especially in face of the modernization policies clearly aimed at protecting Danish interests. The view that these policies were profit-driven and, contrary to what was claimed, endangered the Greenlandic

population, clearly emerges from many studies on the clash and merging of the Greenlandic and Danish identities. Rud (2017: 145) in his book "Colonialism in Greenland: Tradition, Governance and Legacy", demonstrates how "the Greenlanders' transition to civilised modernity was to follow strict guidelines, according to which the Greenlanders would remain distinct from the colonising Europeans". Hence, the colonial discourse aimed at 'protecting' the Inuit identity persisted in the local medicine, law, and politics, arbitrarily imposing barriers between colonisers and colonised, between 'good' or 'bad' Greenlanders – the latter being Greenlanders who rejected modernity to avoid being alienated by it (Petersen, 2016; Rud, 2017). These conceptions and narratives led the Danish administrators to adopt complex and sometimes contradictory social engineering techniques of governance, linked to long-term problems of Greenlandic identity (Hardt, 2018). In fact, Sejersen (2022: 164) argues that "new economic practices generated new moral expectations between people but that they also created new agencies, resource conceptualizations, imagined communities, conflicts and problems", generating winners and losers with new colliding social and moral obligations.

These new socioeconomic policies, unsurprisingly, were aimed at maximising profit by bringing the Danish specialised workforce to Greenland to manage the island, imposing the teaching of Danish as the first language, and relocating Inuit villages at the convenience of economic and urban plans. The G-60 bill, a ten-year plan for social and economic development, included the *foedesfedrkriterie*, the birthplace criterion, which determined higher salaries for Danes (Stenbaek, 1987). Hence, between 1950 and 1970, the number of Danish inhabitants rose from 4.5% to 20%, while the Inuit were relocated from traditional settlements to the towns (Cambou, 2020). In 1953, the Danish government relocated people from the Uummannaq settlement away from their traditional hunting grounds near Thule to facilitate the establishment of an American military base (Holle, 2019). In the same period, as part of Denmark's general modernization policy in Greenland, Danish authorities attempted to

create a cadre of Danish-speaking elite Greenlandic students by moving 22 Greenlandic children from their families to Denmark, where they were educated in Danish (Møller, 2017). The experiment was a failure, as the students lost touch with their roots and became alienated from Greenlandic society, which in many instances had severe psychological repercussions (Møller, 2017). In 1972, the inhabitants of the mining town Qutdligssat were relocated into larger towns when the coal mine was closed because it was no longer profitable, leading to the destruction of families, suicides, alcoholism, and unemployment (Stenbaek, 1987). Furthermore, it has been recently discovered that during the 1960s-70s, thousands of women had a contraceptive device implanted in their wombs, often without consent, as part of a Danish campaign to control Greenland's growing Inuit population (Jung, 2022). Among these cases, only the relocation of Greenlanders from Thule was ruled illegal by the Danish Eastern High Court in 2003 (Spiermann, 2004), while only a small portion of all the other cases has been officially admitted by the Danish government.

Notably, many epidemiological studies on suicides and substance abuse between the 1980s and 2000s mention the colonisation and discrimination of the Inuit as the root cause of mental health issues (Bjerregaard, 2001; Lehti et al., 2009). In fact, as mentioned in the Literature Review, suicides in Greenland cannot be explained by seasonal factors (Björkstén, Bjerregaard and Kripke, 2005). Even in those cases in which seasonality has an impact, the root cause is the original disruption of traditional lifestyles and the human-nature symbiosis (Björkstén and Bjerregaard, 2015) because of Danish social engineering policies. According to some authors, any environmental push factor for committing suicide is connected to the complex history of colonialism, intergenerational traumas, and rapid modernization (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2014). These and other recent studies all confirm that the epidemics of suicides and violence in Greenland could have been avoided if there had been a precise political cause. The fact that this linkage has been largely ignored at the political-academic levels demonstrates how the issue has been normalised

among the population and public opinion. Flora (2012) stressed the fundamental gap between scholar knowledge and local ignorance, in the sense that the issue was basically ignored by the population that was object of study: to the question "'why do they do it?', villagers from a small island in northwest Greenland regularly respond […] with answers such as 'I don't know' or 'it happened by itself.'" In fact, the act of suicide is viewed by many as the expression of self-consciousness, the *nammineq*, and therefore the causes of suicides are not questioned by Greenlanders themselves (Flora, 2012). The political responsibility is evident also in the peaks in suicides after the 1970s and in the inability to address the multigenerational cycles of trauma. Suicide studies on the youth indicated substantial mental health problems in Greenlandic adolescents, being associated with various types of potentially traumatic events (PTE), which brought many of them to develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In fact, 86% of Greenlandic adolescents had been directly exposed to at least one PTE, with the most frequent ones being the death of someone close (Karsberg, Lasgaard and Elklit, 2012) and violence and sexual abuse during childhood (Pauline et al., 2023). Moreover, PTSD was found to be statistically associated among adults as well (Zaragoza Scherman, 2017). It is likely that these phenomena have characterised Greenlandic generations since the 1950s, in varying numbers. Furthermore, intergenerational traumas are likely to have caused other forms of violence. "The level of violence in Greenland is significantly higher than the level in Denmark and the Faroe Islands, as 24.7 out of 1,000 citizens were exposed to violence in 2020" (Løvstrøm and Filskov, 2022: 2). Specifically, "women in the age group 25-34 years represent the group of adults where the largest proportion has been exposed to violence during the last year" and "reports also show that domestic violence against children and sexual abuse in childhood is a substantial problem" (Løvstrøm and Filskov, 2022: 2). Still, these are believed to be individual or at least family-related issues, ignoring the broader picture.

Since the constitution of democracy and a public opinion in Greenland until today, most of the population believes that the living conditions will improve through a complete resolution of the political-juridical gaps between Denmark and Greenland (Thisted, 2017; Marcussen-Mølgaard, 2020). For these reasons, the Reconciliation Commission in 2014 failed (see p. 31). In fact, the Commission ran between 2014 and 2017 with 33 open meetings to which 850 people took part, but because the approach towards 'mental decolonization' might have been too theoretical, "the Commissioners themselves had different ideas about what it should do" (Johnstone, 2022). Even the conceptualizations within the Commission's design were problematic for the Greenlandic population. It was feared that talking about reconciliation would have sparked dangerous ethnic distinctions, assuming that 'Greenlandic' meant only 'Inuit', and everything else could not be considered truly local (Rosing and Kleist, 2012; Thisted, 2017), constituting a perceived threat by Danish descendants. It is evident that the rates of suicide and violence, as well as the failure of resolution strategies, depend on Danish colonialism and the complex Greenlandic-Danish relationship. Nonetheless, among the proponents of the complete decolonization and independence of Greenland, there is neither widespread rejection of the comforts of modern life nor a desire to 'return to the past' (Grydehøj, 2016). At the same time, however, what is Danish is regarded as unhelpful for efforts to fulfil the promise of the Greenlandic nation and shape a Greenlandic future. As such, continued economic dependence on Denmark is by its very nature unconducive to nation-building (Grydehøj, 2016). Unaddressed, these factors foster a mutual distrust between Greenland and Denmark: the latter is convinced that colonialism ended in 1953, while most Greenlanders still consider themselves under pseudo-colonial rule (Grydehøj, 2016). Similarly, Denmark has the perception of protecting the Inuit, the environment, and Western Hemisphere good relations, while Greenland believes that Denmark puts more weight on good relations with the U.S. than

respect for the Greenlandic people in policy decisions (Andersen, 2019). As explained by McLisky and Møller (2021: 711),

> "Many dilemmas characterise Greenlandic identity: how to live with colonial and/or decolonising power dynamics; how to cope with uncertainty about the future; the struggle to maintain or revive Kalaallit language and culture while take advantage of the opportunities of engagement with new cultures; the stark contrast between Greenlandic and European relationships to land and nature; tension between different models of economic development; the social problems caused by colonisation and continuing inequality; the hybrid and dynamic nature of Greenlandic culture; and the difficulties that accompany knowing or acknowledging, representing, and ultimately transcending personal and collective pasts."

Therefore, attempting to reinforcing a decolonized Greenlandic identity still presents a conflictual feature: the narratives around the Greenlandic identity are being extremized towards an exclusion of the 'mixed' population, with elements of both the Greenlandic and Danish heritage (Thisted, 2022). Hence, it has been suggested that a "post-post-colonial Greenlandic identity" should be pursued, reconciling both its Greenlandic and Danish souls (Gad, 2009). The main issue in this decolonizing attempt is that, clearly, Greenlanders and Danes do not agree on what and who this process should practically entail. Some authors believe that currently, Greenland has such a high level of autonomy that it cannot only control the timing of the decision to become independent "but also to lay the economic, political, and social groundwork for a successful independence" (Grydehøj, 2020: 218). Other authors stress that this can be partially true, as this process necessarily needs a clear definition of the role of Denmark, which has been accused of "postcolonial gaslighting" for blaming Greenland for not meeting the basic criteria for statehood while rejecting any

responsibility for its fragility (Hansen, 2023). As such, Greenland cannot be viewed as a mere motionless victim but as an actor attempting to build its own role at the international level. In fact, for example, Greenland's participation at the EU and UN is granted by agreements with Denmark (Inatsisartut, 2023), that are leveraged for a dual objective: on one side, it uses the association with Denmark to enlarge its relations, and on the other hand, it leverages these relations to distance itself from the political dependency on Denmark and reinforce its national identity (Gad, 2013; Gad, 2017).

Thus, several contradictions stem from Danish colonialism between modernisation, Greenlandic autonomy, multi-level discrimination, and disrupting local livelihoods. While between the 19th and 20th centuries Denmark did not have the urgency to invest exploitatively in Greenland, after the Second World War the global equilibria evolved and brought the island to the centre of diplomatic-strategic global interests. The latter, alongside the Danish anxiety to reinforce its control of Greenland, were the main reasons why specific policies were implemented to tightly bind the governance of the island under Danish direct influence and the Greenlandic elite to Danish culture – all of which commenced with its incorporation as a county in 1953. Arguably, the inadequate policies implemented by the subsequent Greenlandic administrations are the continuation of the same political culture that neglects the safety of individuals, especially indigenous people. However, at the same time, Greenland developed as an autonomous entity, and many past initiatives attempted to address the abovementioned contradictions. These constituted a partial resolution that ameliorated the Greenlanders' livelihood while reinforcing two taboos that curb Greenlandic development. Firstly, at the diplomatic level, Denmark keeps insisting on its 'benign colonisation' and its positive role in Greenlandic history. Secondly, at the societal level, suicides and abuses are still considered minor issues. These are the two dimensions of systemic violence in Greenland: the continued gaslighting from Denmark and the non-resolution of the root causes of the suicide epidemic. The particularity comes from the fact that these types

of violence do not depend on hatred but on ignorance at the inter-state and local levels (Andersen, 2019).

Applying the Discrimination Diagram (see fig. 7, p. 45), the Greenlandic history can be interpreted as moving between phases I and II. This explains why the levels of violence have generally been considered acceptable or ignorable at the political-academic levels. While phases III, IV, and V never occurred, the humanist metamorphosis explicated in phase VI is clearly needed. Furthermore, recalling the Escalation Curve, the situation in Greenland always remained below the psychosocial violence threshold. This thesis does not include a quantitative representation of the curve, as more research efforts to gather and analyse metadata and statistics are required. Nonetheless, the curve would show peaks in proximity to forced displacements, other discriminatory policies, and the highest rates of suicide. The assimilation of different forms of violence is fundamental to understanding the multidimensionality of conflicts, the contribution of each form of violence to the general perception or real condition of conflicts, and ultimately to effectively assessing escalating factors. A violent conflict in Greenland never occurred, but the situation continued to be critical at the micro-level because the political and cultural discrimination provoked frustration among the Inuit, fostering the psychological push factors for self-destruction and violence against other fragile individuals. With them being unfree to determine their lives as a nation, they believe that the solution is regaining total control over resources and politics. This thesis demonstrates that, beyond the material approach, Greenland also requires a nation-wide psychosocial healing strategy.

Emerging Threats or Opportunities?

The unresolved sociopolitical issues, summed up with uncertainty provoked by exogenous factors, blur the distinction between threats and opportunities for the Greenlandic people at the nexus of foreign investments and

climate change. The latter constitutes a threat to the traditional lifestyle and the fishery sector, while it might open Greenland to more opportunities in terms of commercial routes and natural resource exploitation. These will attract foreign investments, which, with the current global political trends, will come along with inter-state confrontation. If this is the case, Denmark will probably try to keep the situation under its control, implying a further deterioration in relations with Greenland. The development of the island risks representing a "Faustian bargain", where independence is exchanged at the price of ecological and democratic rights with other powers beyond Denmark (Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2017; Nuttall 2013), hence constituting a territory of power confrontation. As opposed to Western countries, China is seen as the main competitor in the area. China and Chinese state-owned companies might invest in infrastructure (such as airports for intercontinental flights) and mines (especially of rare minerals and hydrocarbons), two sectors that would reinforce the 'Polar Silk Road' and endanger the American strategic dominance of the area – at least from the American and European perspectives (Eiterjord, 2019; Dodds, Woon and Xu, 2022). At the same time, by contrast, the Greenlandic government considers the Chinese investments as leverage to generate much-needed capital and as a "trading tool" with Denmark and the US (Grydehøj, 2016). Still, none of these projects have become operational, and the underlying divergences remain latent (Sørensen, 2017), as "Greenland is not a high-priority area for Chinese companies because it continues to be seen as an extreme and remote environment" (Têtu and Lasserre, 2017). But, as mentioned above, climate change might alter the political-strategic situation.

At the internal level, Greenland's authorities have been appropriately cautious in their efforts to develop an effective regulatory and policy framework to manage extraction projects (Boersma and Foley, 2014: VII), but reflections on local governance are needed to assure an exploitation of natural resources compliant with human and civil rights (Dodds and Nuttall, 2018; Kristensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2018; Larsen and Ingimundarson, 2023). In 2020, a

survey demonstrated that almost half of the population preferred a system of high autonomy to a complete independence that might lead to a decrease in living standards, although 67% supported a complete independence conditional on economic stability (Grydehøj, 2020). The risk currently perceived is that the little steps towards autonomy could be lost because of new dependencies with state and private multinational companies in the extractive sector (Kuokkanen, 2019). In fact, "while most Inuit Greenlanders welcome economic development and see mining in particular as inevitable and necessary for economic self-sufficiency, there is a substantial degree of unease with regard to the limited consultation process and lack of broad-based civil society engagement in deciding and planning large-scale resource extraction projects" (Kuokkanen, 2019: 18). This derives from Greenland's memory of the past as well as the several governmental campaigns that publicised the search for and extraction of natural resources as the main way to realise independence. Indeed, a report from 2014 notes that the government's long-term goal is to further commercially viable oil extraction and to keep active five to ten mines in Greenland (Government of Greenland, 2014). Nonetheless, in Greenland, there are no active mining sites yet.

Furthermore, Greenland claims that Danish-American intervention against Chinese investments is a form of neocolonialism, accusing Denmark of adopting a double standard as it already trades with China (McGwin, 2018; Andersen, 2019). This last point appears utterly evident in the face of the Danish and American exclamations, in which the interests, agency, and perspectives of the Greenlandic people are often lost (Chater, Greaves and Sarson, 2020; Grydehøj, 2020). One aspect that might relieve Danish and American preoccupation is the fact that, generally, outside its geographic proximities, China seeks economic relations without inference in local politics, the same way it wants the Western countries to 'stay out' of Xinjiang (Chen, 2022). Also, any potential disequilibrium caused by Chinese economic activities in Greenland will most likely be compensated by the military power of the US and NATO.

Nonetheless, Denmark avoids the unnecessary militarization of the area to avoid triggering an arms race in the region, an approach that would probably be sustained also by an independent Greenland (Jørgensen and Rahbek-Clemmensen , 2009; Exner-Pirot, 2020). Furthermore, a popular opinion among scholars and security practitioners is based on the idea that Western strategic interests in Greenland should not involve military means, making potential NATO membership problematic (Rasmussen, 2013). Still, there has not been any recent review of Greenland's position in strategic-military terms after the Ukraine invasion in 2022, an event that inevitably influences this specific debate. In anticipation of this possibility, the militarization of the Arctic for American interests during peacetime would most likely be opposed by Greenland. In 2016, it came to light that climate change could lead to the leakage of nuclear waste from the abandoned American military facility Camp Century, deepening the resentment over the perceived lack of benefits that Greenland obtains from the American presence (Colgan et al., 2016). Thus, the main issue is that if the US and Western states in general do not dominate the infrastructural-economic landscape of a large part of the Arctic, it will constitute a weak point in the case of heightened conflict with both China and Russia. Notably, the great-powers' interests in Greenland will most likely keep creating security problems and challenging both Danish sovereignty and Greenlandic autonomy.

Based on these reflections, Danish ontological security and international role heavily depend on Greenland, as in the post-Second World War period (Hansen, 2023). Still, while the overall dependency on Denmark is undoubtedly a legacy of colonialism, the status quo can hardly be considered a form of neocolonialism (Petersen, 2016). Eventually, the Danish contradictory behaviour emerges: the Danes do not want to relinquish their interests over Greenland while refuting any involvement in any form of historical, social, and cultural reconciliation with the colonial past. The block grant then appears as a rent for strategic services, but without it, Greenland risks collapse. Deepening

the emerging threats faced by Greenland highlights again how international strategic interests deeply harm local communities. Thus, making the latter more resilient to external forces is necessary and feasible, but unsustainable in the long run.

Theoretical and Practical Implications: A Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Greenland

The current rates of suicides and abuses would proportionally constitute a matter of national security in other countries. Instead, in Greenland, because of the low density of population and the political environment, these matters end up muted compared to other factors. It is necessary to abandon the narratives around the colonial-originated ideas of 'indigenous fragility and resilience' as the main strategic objective. In fact, it has been proven that it only scratches the surface of the problem, while the root causes remain unaddressed. Currently, Greenlanders are the owners of their own development while foreign patterns and roles that influence it must be identified. The international-local dialectic has created conflictual dimensions and provoked violent phenomena in the past. Currently, it hinders any effective resolution strategy aimed at breaking the cycles of intergenerational trauma. If Greenland needs some sort of peace, any form of study or policy building activity necessarily entails reflection on what needs to evolve at the systemic level. Most importantly, peace is achieved by consensus, not force (Tseer, Musah and Avogo, 2023): high level coordination efforts must come with democratic consultations and the broad involvement of the citizens. This would increase the awareness of the Greenlanders in the face of the debates on the future of Greenland about the opening of a new mine, commercial routes, or military bases.

This demonstrates that (1) Greenland needs a proper conflict resolution approach focused on reconciling the population with their past while being mindful of rapid economic developments that could further disrupt their

livelihoods; (2) Denmark should actively take part in this process; and (3) more broadly, social violence and conflicts are determined in the first place by discrimination from those who control political-economic resources. Therefore, resolution and prevention ultimately depend on systemic local change alongside a redefinition of external relations. Nonetheless, one should be wary of the results achievable by developing the ontological and empirical bases set forth in this dissertation. The theoretical foundations might be too broad compared to the peculiarity of the case study, making it problematic to materialise any practical proposition stemming from it. This would also complicate its application to other cases. Still, this dissertation, by adopting general terms, aims at offering several windows of different opportunities as a response to stagnating contexts.

The first step to completing and developing this research would be a meta-analysis of quantitative and qualitative studies on suicides to track and diversify the root causes beyond the general concepts of 'modernization and discrimination' (see Hoon, 2013). This would allow the quantitative application of the proposed Escalation Curve. Other studies could include a psychometric analysis of the population and a focus on the most fragile age group, the youth, through psychological autopsies. Additionally, further studies could deepen the identitarian conundrums between Denmark and Greenland by re-analysing history to deconstruct the colonial heritage and reconcile the parts (McLisky, 2021: 277). Moreover, the suicide rates among other Arctic communities are considered a major public health concern (Collins et al., 2017). The approach adopted in this thesis could help in the assessment of the conditions of other Arctic indigenous people. Finally, the proposed Theoretical Framework, composed of the Discrimination Diagram and the Escalation Curve, can be employed in the study of any other territory, social group, or relationship.

At the level of governance, studies suggested the adoption of community-based and culturally guided interventions and evaluations (Redvers et al., 2015) to adjust psychiatric guidance to autochthonous individuals' needs

(Charlier et al., 2017). Fundamental is also a reform of the health sector, focused on improving the system's capillarity to reach more people and breaking down the language and cultural barriers to the suicide taboo. For the latter purpose, more research in the field would also implement forms of indirect therapeutic and psychological support, as experienced by Chachamovich et al. (2013). More broadly, legislative measures should be implemented "on a general basis against discrimination on all generally recognised grounds, including gender, race or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religion, both within and outside the labour market" (Løvstrøm and Filskov, 2022: 4). It is essential to mention other initiatives such as the "Proposal for a National Strategy for Suicide Prevention in Greenland," presented in 2004 at the Greenlandic Parliament, which nonetheless has not been implemented (PAARISA, 2004). It included the identification of the main groups at risk and the prevention of specific risk factors, alongside initiatives of a psychological, educational, and social nature. Also noteworthy is the proposal by Minton and Thiesen (2022) to establish independent investigations by the Greenlandic government into the abuses implemented by Danish policies after the Second World War. This would increase the likelihood of Denmark participating in a new Reconciliation Commission in the future. All these proposals should be integrated in a coordinated national strategy.

In the Theoretical Framework, it has been demonstrated that proper conflict resolution entails a physical (building) and a psychosocial (unifying) dimension. In the past decades, Greenland has slowly but steadily improved on both sides, but the high rates of violence show that more needs to be achieved. Apart from the Danish unwillingness to recognise all the effects of its role as a coloniser, there are no significant discriminatory practices at work in Greenland. Therefore, the levels of violence depend on multigenerational traumas that affect the population as the sum of traumatic individual experiences that, taken alone, seem inexplicable. Thus, further financial investments and commercial endeavours that do not consider the psychosocial impact on the local population

will likely worsen these phenomena. To avoid any form of violence escalation (both in terms of renewed discriminatory practices against the indigenous communities and in terms of micro-level physical violence), Greenland should undergo a process of governance restructuring that secures the ownership of the means of production and resources in the hands of the Greenlandic people. Nonetheless, this process is conditional on a proper nation-wide reconciliation. More specifically, this programme could entail family-based communal reconciliation in accordance with the demographic conditions of the Greenlandic settlements. This approach would effectively tackle the intergenerational nature of trauma while conciliating other deeply rooted issues such as gender violence and substance abuse. Most importantly, indigenous culture and traditions should be revitalised through programmes of preservation and diffusion, as their positive outcomes on mental health have been proven (see p. 26). Hence, these efforts must be backed by appropriate laws and infrastructural reinforcements for national-local coordination and continuous monitoring and assessment. Finally, this cross-sectoral strategy would require multi-agency engagement, bringing together not only policymakers and research centres but also other international actors, subnational formal representatives, non-governmental organisations, and private companies.

Conclusion

This dissertation, through qualitative theory-building case study research, demonstrated that high politics and international strategic interests negatively affected the livelihoods in Greenland by causing cycles of intergenerational trauma at the base of the high rates of suicides and other forms of micro-level violence – namely child abuse and gender violence. The rapid disruption of sociocultural structures is identified as the main triggering factor of the epidemic of suicide and substance abuse in the 1970s-80s, directly attributable to precise strategic-political choices implemented since the 1950s. The latter consisted of policies of social engineering that modified the Greenlandic ethnographic and demographic landscape aimed at maximising the island's resources and strategic value. Because of the Danification, the intensification of the fishery sector, the opening of mines, and the exposure to international markets, Greenlanders experienced fragmentation of families and marginalisation. This led to what has been defined as 'social and emotional conflict', actualized at the individual level and interpreted as the 'feeling of uselessness from no longer being a productive member of the group'. Further, this phenomenon also provoked substance abuse, child abuse, and gender violence. Thus, deriving from a particular evolving material condition, the cause of the epidemic of suicide moved to a more general series of traumas inherited from previous generations, which made the Greenlanders, especially young men, unable to explain their own physical-mental conditions. Moreover, now that Greenland is quasi-completely independent, there is nothing to fight for, provoking heightened frustration. This also explains why complete political independence alone, even if reached through a high number of international investments, will not solve the epidemic of suicides. Indeed, in the past twenty years, Greenlanders have focused mainly on reconciling with their past, attempting to decolonize their own identity, and acknowledging the risks of disentangling themselves from Danish economic sustenance. Still today,

Greenland's dilemmas reside in the imbalance between political independence, economic development, indigenous rights, and foreign countries' strategic interests. Hence, this dissertation proposes a cross-sectoral strategy composed of an effective intra-societal reconciliation, a resolution of the Greenlandic-Danish relations, and a risk assessment mechanism for future external interventions on the island.

The Discrimination Diagram and the Escalation Curve proposed here respond to the current lack of holistic, rigorous, and systematic approaches in the peacebuilding field. Only by deepening the violent experiences of a population, its interconnectedness with external realities and production systems, as well as the people's individual views, is it possible to reform the practice of peace. These conclusions prove that violent conflicts originate from discriminatory practices and structures, where the prevention of violence depends on the efficient redistribution of resources and effective psychosocial healing. In Greenland, the rapid escalation of discriminatory practices alongside the establishment of redistributive mechanisms avoided further escalation, although the root causes of violence had already been identified. These, unaddressed, provoked the high rates of suicide and abuse. The frameworks constitute a broader theoretical guidance that should be integrated with effective technologies for social listening and renewed economic indicators of wealth and power. Ideally, these approaches will facilitate the humanist metamorphosis of the 'science and technology' of the sociopolitical realms. The main goal is to prevent periods of scarcity or uncontrolled intensification of exploitation from fuelling discriminatory practices and structures.

Acknowledging that the Greenlandic reality, in terms of human security, national identity, and international relations, is conflictual or critical, opens the island to alternative opportunities to lay the bases for its sustainable and democratic development. This approach is crucial, especially in the face of exogenous and inevitable threats such as climate change and the great powers' strategic-military confrontation, which are particularly affecting the Arctic.

Most likely, climate change will profoundly affect the Greenlanders' lifestyles by forcing them to adapt to a new Arctic environment. This will open the region to increased strategic interests in terms of resource exploitation and infrastructural development for commercial, civilian, and military purposes. If not properly balanced, these could further endanger Greenland. For these reasons, the theoretical approach and the empirical findings proposed here are fundamental to shifting the attention of political and strategic choices towards human beings and their livelihoods. Reiterating this goal is crucial in light of the current political-economic relations between Greenland and Denmark. The latter still supports the former with the annual grant for the unquestioned strategic services in a context where modernising reforms are still perceived by many as forced Danification. Modernization has already been recognised as a 'package' that amplified the risk factors of suicide: further developments, multiplied by climate change, could amplify violent phenomena. If any process does not include a clear compromise with the Greenlandic people, even if this means a wealthier Greenland, the numbers are likely to increase in the future.

Realistically, Greenland will keep pursuing the same two goals: carving out as much autonomy as possible without losing the block grant and attracting foreign investments to strengthen its ailing finances. The current fundamental gap is to determine how these investments will be regulated and, consequently, how the Danish annual grant will be reformulated. It is imperative that Greenlanders are not forced into new productive systems, no matter how necessary, fundamental, or environmentally-friendly. In the contemporary world, insecurities derive from our current gaps in understanding evolving human and international relations, which are becoming increasingly conflictual. We must better comprehend the liminal spaces where a supposedly peaceful situation degenerates into violence and where opportunities for cooperation degenerate into weaknesses if we are to prevent any violent escalation at the local and international levels.

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