

CHAPTER 18

INDIGENOUS WESTPHALIAN SOVEREIGNTY?

Decolonization, secession, and Indigenous rights in Greenland



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INTRODUCTION

Greenland is undergoing a significant transformation as the result of the 2009 Self-Government Act. The new self-government era signifies much greater autonomy and decision-making for a country with an overwhelming Inuit majority. The Greenland Inuit are no longer subjugated by a colonial state and the constitutional protection of the rights of the Greenland Inuit exceeds that of most other Indigenous peoples in the world. Achieving extensive self-government in 2009 has compelled Greenland to explore new revenue sources and has created enormous pressure to develop the country's mineral resources, considered the main avenue for implementing Greenlandic self-government and a condition for full independence. The development of mineral resources creates a range of social, environmental, and political challenges compounded by complex circumstances characterized by climate change, global geopolitical tensions, and race for control of and resources in the Arctic.

This chapter considers Greenland's unique political state of affairs and discusses how it departs from and also contradicts the norm of Indigenous self-determination as non-secession. I discuss different conceptions of sovereignty and examine how they play out in Greenland. The chapter begins with a discussion of conceptions of sovereignty and self-determination and proceeds to consider the political context and implementation of self-government in Greenland. In conclusion, I propose that Inuit Greenlanders are advancing what I call "Indigenous Westphalian Sovereignty," a unique approach to self-determination in the Indigenous world. Notwithstanding that Greenland's aspiration for modern nationhood is not widely shared by most Indigenous peoples in the world, the chapter sheds light on the limits of the concept of Indigenous self-determination as non-secession, and on the enormous challenges and existing rifts that an endeavor for Indigenous independence poses. The chapter draws on interviews I conducted with 17 Inuit Greenlanders in Nuuk in March and April 2013, and is based on my comparative research on Indigenous self-determination in Canada, Greenland, and Scandinavia (Kuokkanen 2019).

SELF-DETERMINATION AS SOVEREIGNTY, NON-INTERFERENCE, AND DECOLONIZATION

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted in 2007 by the General Assembly establishes self-determination as a collective human right that enables a group to determine its own political, social, cultural, and economic affairs. Indigenous self-determination is a foundational right and principle that gives rise to other central Indigenous rights, such as free, prior, and informed consent, as stipulated in a number of articles vis-à-vis development of Indigenous peoples' lands, territories and resources, forcible relocation, cultural and intellectual property, and states' legislative or administrative measures. The recognition of Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination in international law was a major struggle, and a significant effort by Indigenous representatives worldwide was put into convincing apprehensive states that the right to self-determination does not mean secession or independent nationhood. The Inuit, through their pan-Arctic NGO, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), were among the leading forces of the global Indigenous lobby that finally succeeded in the process that led to the adoption of UNDRIP.¹ Considering this history of Indigenous rights advocacy and the role of ICC, it might seem surprising that for the Inuit in Greenland (or Greenlanders), self-determination represents a transitional stage toward full political independence.

Divergent interpretations of the content of self-determination derive from different conceptions of sovereignty, which are highly contested and historically contingent (Barker 2005). The concept of self-determination as statehood within geographically separate territories and jurisdictions is rooted in the Westphalian concept of sovereignty and the related doctrine of non-interference in the domestic affairs of a state. The interpretation of self-determination as political independence, however, has been considered a misconception originating in the post-World War II decolonization framework, which “involved the transformation of colonial territories into new states under the normative aegis of self-determination” (Anaya 1996, 80). Further, state sovereignty conceptualized as non-interference and ultimate authority is being undermined by global capitalism and international law (Lapidoth 1992; Held 1995) and as a result, sovereignty is reconstructed at various levels, ranging from global and regional to sub-state settings (Sassen 1996). Some scholars even suggest that sovereignty may never have existed to the degree normally associated with the concept (Philpott 1995).

The concept of sovereignty is also complex and contested in Indigenous scholarship. Some emphasize how sovereignty for Indigenous peoples seldom calls forth independence or non-interference (Maaka and Fleras 2000, 93), whereas others maintain that there are Indigenous peoples that have always been sovereign and independent (Becker 1998). Others still suggest that the concept and ideology of sovereignty are incompatible with Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and relating in the world (Alfred 1999; Nadasdy 2017). For them, Indigenous sovereignty is a contradiction in terms and conceals the ways in which the hegemonic role of sovereignty in the world, dominated by a system of sovereign states, has profoundly negative impacts on Indigenous peoples and their social, cultural, and political organization. Even when Indigenous people do not seek independence, they nevertheless have to assume the trappings of sovereignty and the state if they wish to operate “in a universe of

states and state-like political entities” (Nadasdy 2017, 7). This is particularly evident in contemporary Indigenous self-government institutions.

In today’s interconnected world, the Westphalian view of the world as divided into mutually exclusive territories appears deficient. It disregards the reality of overlapping and multiple authorities and communities, and the interdependence that characterizes the human experience (Anaya 1996, 78). It also ignores Indigenous conceptions of self-determination and sovereignty, in which the notion of shared territories and jurisdictions and co-existing sovereignties are common (Borrows 2002; Macklem 2001). As an example, the historical Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt covenant, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Anishinaabeg, and allied nations provided for peaceably sharing and caring for the hunting territories and resources around the Great Lakes (King 2007; Lytwyn 1997).

On the other hand, there are Indigenous people who support the principle of non-interference which, they argue, forms the foundation of the treaty agreements. Most notable is the Guswentah or Two-Row Wampum Treaty presented by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to the Dutch in 1613. The Guswentah is a beaded belt consisting of two parallel rows of purple beads separated by three rows of white beads. The predominant interpretation focuses on the two rows of purple beads which represent two vessels going down the river. Some emphasize the meaning of the three rows of white beads which represent the principles of peace, friendship, and respect, while for others, the fact that the two rows never meet symbolizes and confirms the principle of non-interference (Hill 2017).

Many Indigenous peoples assert their pre-existing sovereignty, evident in the fact that at the time of contact they were politically independent societies or nations, governing themselves and their territories under their own laws. Their pre-existing sovereignty exists independent of constitutional, common, or civil law, and thus is not legitimated or validated by these legislative frameworks (Henderson 2008). Indigenous sovereignty was historically recognized by settlers through treaty-making but is frequently ignored and dismissed by contemporary states, even in cases where courts have recognized the existence of *sui generis* Indigenous sovereignty.² Yet, Indigenous sovereignty continues to be exercised collectively and individually, for instance, through hunting, fishing, or reindeer herding, or through the enactment of Indigenous governance and laws. Today, claims of Indigenous sovereignty are often synonymous with claims of Indigenous self-determination and the two terms are frequently employed synonymously (Barker 2005; Monture Angus 1998).

Notwithstanding Indigenous representatives successfully arguing for more accurate and inclusive interpretations of sovereignty and self-determination beyond separation and non-interference, they remain up against the international legal norms of state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Anaya (2009) reminds us, “The reach and application of the principle or right of self-determination... cannot be fully appreciated without attention to the doctrine of state sovereignty, which remains central to the international legal and political system” (194). This doctrine restricts Indigenous self-determination by restraining the ability of the international system to interfere with or influence affairs considered internal or domestic (such as policymaking).

That said, the argument according to which Indigenous people do not pose a “threat to the territorial integrity of states” (Pitty and Smith 2011, 127) is not fully

accurate. Not all Indigenous people agree with remaining subordinate to the doctrine of state sovereignty. For some, the failure to question the legitimacy of state sovereignty over Indigenous peoples is a major deficiency of UNDRIP which, they point out, is a deeply compromised document and is not supported by all Indigenous representatives who participated in drafting it (Champagne 2012, see also Watson and Venne 2012; White Face 2013). Others stress the role and significance of the international system in adjudicating the question of Crown sovereignty vis-à-vis Indigenous sovereignty because of the partiality of the courts of the state (Manuel and Derrickson 2015, 167–168). For the Inuit in Greenland, self-determination is seen primarily as a transitional period towards independence, and as increased economic and political power to govern.

GREENLAND SELF-GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

Passed in 2009, the Act on Greenland Self-Government grants extensive self-governing powers to the country. It contains 33 areas of jurisdiction to exercise legislative and executive authority, with Denmark retaining control of the constitution, citizenship, the Supreme Court, foreign affairs, defense, and currency. The Self-Government Act, as it is more commonly known, explicitly recognizes the right to an independent Greenland. Chapter 8 of the Act, titled, “Greenland’s access to independence,” provides that if a decision for independence is taken by the people of Greenland,³ the governments of Greenland and Denmark shall negotiate an agreement subject to the consent of the Danish Parliament. If that stage is reached, “Independence for Greenland shall imply that Greenland assumes sovereignty over the Greenland territory” (2009, Article 21.4).

The vision of an independent Greenland is not new. It gained currency in the 1970s during the political mobilization of young Greenlanders, most of whom were studying in Denmark. According to the former premier, Lars-Emil Johansen, independence is a legitimate aspiration “deeply anchored in the Inuit soul” (AFP 2008). Most Greenlanders view self-determination as an important transitional stage to political and economic independence from Denmark. They agree that the transition will be long and challenging, but nevertheless, “at the very end of the road we can be our own nation” (interview with a preeminent municipal politician, 8 April 2013).

The three most significant aspects of the Act include the recognition of the people of Greenland as a people in international law; the exclusive right to subsurface mineral resources, and economic self-sufficiency in case of full independence. Currently, fishing is the main and the only considerable industry, accounting for over 90 percent of total exports. Greenland continues to be highly dependent on an annual grant from Denmark of 3.9 billion Danish kroner (US \$600 million) which constitutes over half of the government budget (Schionning 2020). In the past, the grant amount was negotiated between the two countries every two or three years. With the Self-Government Act, the amount has been frozen and has presented itself as a double-edged sword. As it is no longer negotiated, the grant cannot be used as political leverage by Denmark in other negotiations, which apparently happened occasionally “if we didn’t behave” (interview with government official, 3 April 2013).

IMPLEMENTING SELF-GOVERNMENT

The Self-Government Act and its accompanied fixed annual subsidy have created great pressure for the Greenland government to find new avenues for revenue. The most prominent option is the development of the country's extensive mineral resources and offshore oil and gas deposits. The first five years of self-government in particular were dominated by political debate and public discourse on mineral exploration and the entry of multinational corporations. One of the main reasons for this was the high commodity prices which resulted in a global rush by mining companies to conduct explorations in Greenland (see Nuttall, this volume). The warming of the Arctic due to climate change and the melting of Greenland's ice cap have also enabled more extensive explorations both on the land and offshore. Aleqa Hammond, the first female Premier, won a landslide victory in the 2013 Greenland national elections on promises to mine the country and put it on the path to independence. For her, climate change constituted an unprecedented opportunity for Greenland. She suggested that global warming is good for Greenland, enabling the exploitation of the country's large mineral resources.

Overall, the period after the national elections in March 2013 was characterized by considerable political instability. In October 2013, the Inatsisartut (the Parliament of Greenland) supported the controversial Siumut initiative to lift the 25-year-old moratorium on uranium mining, which enables the extraction of rare earth metals found trapped within uranium reserves. Rare earth metals are essential components of modern technology, from cell phones to weapons systems. The ban was overturned by a narrow margin of 15 to 14. During the parliamentary debate on the moratorium, a public protest was held in Nuuk against the lifting of the ban. A group called "Uranium: Maintain Zero Tolerance" petitioned the government with 1,200 signatures "to slow the process down, delay the vote, and bring it to a referendum to be voted on by all Greenlanders" (Weaver 2013). The leader of the opposition party Inuit Ataqatigiit, Sara Olsvig, expressed her dismay at the lack of citizen involvement in the decision-making. She referred to free, prior, and informed consent as a key norm of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and maintained, "the process conducted by the government is the most anti-democratic process we have seen conducted in Greenland for a long time" (Olsvig 2013) (see Figure 18.1).

Another controversial decision by Hammond's government was the awarding of a license to London Mining for a USD 2.3 billion iron-ore open pit mine located in Isukasia, 150 kilometers from the capital in the Nuuk Fjord. Known as the Isua project, it was criticized for a number of reasons, including inadequate public consultation and considerable environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts, including the importation of several thousand foreign laborers to construct and operate the mine. Commodity prices, however, collapsed in 2014 and led to the pullout of most oil and mineral exploration companies from Greenland, citing high infrastructure and operating costs in the remote Arctic region. The steep downturn in iron ore prices also led to the collapse of London Mining, putting the Isua project on hold (Hornby, Milne, and Wilson 2015).

The sudden downturn and departure of most multinational corporations dampened the political discourse of swift economic and political independence. Yet mining companies remain interested in Greenland, and some are currently developing mines



Figure 18.1 Protest in the southern Greenland town of Narsaq against lifting the ban on uranium mining in Greenland. Chinese mining firms have proposed to establish a uranium mine nearby. Photo: John Rasmussen, Narsaq Foto.

in the country that saw dramatic levels of melting of its ice sheet in 2019 (Davis 2020; Northam 2019; Peter 2019). The Government of Greenland also waived mineral exploration license obligations until the end of 2020 as a way of helping the mining sector operate in Greenland amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Naalakkersuisut 2020).

Apart from concerns about the environmental and social impacts of new mines, a number of questions arise regarding the importation of several thousand foreign laborers to construct and operate the mines, including questions of integration, working conditions, housing, and infrastructure (Kristensen 2008). As many participants pointed out, thousands of foreign workers in Greenland would take a significant toll on a sparsely inhabited country with a population of 57,000 and could have a negative impact on the status and use of the Greenlandic language. Some raised the risk of Greenlanders becoming a minority in their own country (cf. The Committee for Greenlandic Mineral Resources to the Benefit of Society 2014, 23).

One of the main critics of the rush to develop mineral resources has been the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). In the 2011 Circumpolar Inuit declaration on resource development principles in Inuit Nunaat (the homeland of the Inuit), the ICC called for a balanced approach to extraction abided by “the free, prior, and informed consent of the Inuit of that region” (ICC 2011, Articles 2.1, and 2.3). In Greenland it is not, however, necessarily clear who is the appropriate constituent to give consent. Is it the government composed of Inuit Greenlanders, or the population at large? Both the government and the multinational companies have been criticized for their limited public engagement and shortcomings with regard to consultation and transparency. Information about

the social, cultural, and environmental impacts of resource extraction has been hard to come by and is often clouded in technical jargon, or available only in Danish or English (Hansen 2013; Lund Sørensen 2008; Lyberth 2008; Nuttall 2008; Wilson 2015).

The pursuit of independence from Denmark is characterized by the risk of novel dependencies. Research shows that neoliberal, market-driven self-governance creates new forms of dependency and frequently widens socio-economic inequalities in Indigenous communities (see Kuokkanen 2011; Slowey 2008). Collaboration between Indigenous peoples and corporations also often mimics colonial relationships (Irlbacher-Fox 2009). A more recent concern for Greenland is the growing interest by the world's most powerful countries. China has already signed mining deals with Greenland and the United States announced the opening of a consulate and a multimillion economic aid package (after its offer to purchase Greenland from Denmark in August 2019 was swiftly spurned) in order to curb Russian and Chinese influence in the Arctic (Lynch 2020).⁴

Greenland's geopolitical significance has grown greatly amid the global race for rare earth and other mineral resources, but also due to Arctic waters becoming increasingly navigable as a result of climate change (Peter 2019). The global interest has been met with mixed feelings in Greenland, generated consternation in Denmark, and led to the placing of Greenland on the top of the Danish national security agenda, as well as raising concerns about the Arctic's growing security disputes (Peter 2019). Regardless, none of this has swayed Greenlanders' ambitions for future independence. According to current premier Kim Kielsen, more than 70 percent of people in Greenland support this political endeavor.⁵ The concern for new dependencies, however, looms as large as ever. In addition to potential economic dependency on transnational exploration companies, the new question is whether an independent Greenland would end up as a protectorate of the US (Breum 2020).

This is not to patronizingly suggest that Greenland and Greenlanders are not able to take care of their own affairs. Rather, my intention is to point out that considering the country's highly strategic geopolitical location together with its increasingly accessible mineral resources, it is relatively easy for other actors – whether states or corporations – to take advantage of the combination of Greenland's desire for political independence and its dire economic circumstances. The great dilemma for Greenland, on which nearly all Greenlanders agree, is finding the balance between the pressing need for new revenue sources, for diversifying the country's struggling economy, and for engaging in resource extraction, while meeting high environmental and social standards so that the Inuit hunting and fishing culture (dependent on healthy natural resources) is not jeopardized.

MULTIPLE SOVEREIGNTIES

In the Indigenous world, Inuit Greenlanders are in a unique position to push for full political independence. This is primarily for two reasons, beyond the matter of Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination. First, self-determination in Greenland takes the form of a public government and applies to the aggregate population of the country – not only to Inuit Greenlanders. Yet even if it is not *de jure* Indigenous self-government, thanks to demographics, it is *de facto* Indigenous self-government with an entirely Inuit-controlled legislature.

Second, for a brief post-war period (1945–1954) Greenland was a “non-self-governing territory” under Chapter XI of the United Nations Charter. During that period, Denmark was required to report on Greenland to the relevant UN decolonization bodies. Greenland, as a former overseas colony, is a unique case among Indigenous peoples because at least in theory, it qualifies and is entitled to independence under the decolonization framework that provided for the creation of new states in Asia and Africa in the so-called decolonization era. Accordingly, the legal term “the people of Greenland” (the entire population of the country) is considered a colonial people for the purpose of the right to self-determination. If Inuit Greenlanders will indeed one day be sovereign in the Westphalian sense of the term, it is not because of their indigeneity but because of the country’s history and demographics. This is also partly why the Inuit Greenlanders tend not to emphasize the discourse of Indigenous sovereignty; for most people, it is simply irrelevant.

Notably, however, the pursuit for independence is complicated by Greenland’s civil society, especially by the ICC which seeks to decouple Inuit self-determination from Westphalian sovereignty.

As an organization representing all Inuit people across the Arctic, the ICC focuses on the concept of Indigenous self-determination as an Inuit control over Inuit affairs but does not advocate for independence. According to the ICC, static conceptions of sovereignty (i.e., independence) do not adequately recognize Inuit rights “gained through international law, land claims and self-government processes” (2009, Article 4.1). Instead, the organization calls for greater recognition of the contested, overlapping nature and the unfixed meaning of sovereignty, including recognizing that sovereignties “are frequently divided within federations in creative ways to recognize the right of peoples” (ICC 2009, Article 2.1).

Independence would make Greenland the first Inuit state, and would make Greenlanders the arguably first Indigenous people in the world to achieve statehood.⁶ As such, Greenland would be radically pushing the limits of Indigenous self-determination, defined by the international Indigenous political discourse as non-secession. At the same time, Greenland has also been presented as an example for other Indigenous peoples to follow. For former premier Kuupiq Kleist, the Greenland self-government agreement with Denmark represents “a de facto implementation” of UNDRIP, and a leading example to “Indigenous peoples everywhere” (Kleist 2009a; 2009b). However, in Greenland, Indigenous rights discourse has been, by and large, replaced by discourses of the nation-state and modern nationhood. Nationhood in Greenland is premised less on Indigenous identity, governance, or rights than on western conceptions of autonomy, the nation, and the nation-state. Rather than a matter of Indigenous self-determination and rights, the development of autonomy and self-government in Greenland has largely been a project of mainstream, standard nation-building. First home rule (1979–2009) and now self-rule have served as progress and evolution toward that goal.

Nation-building – and the nation itself – is commonly considered a process of constant mediation between modern and traditional (Canovan 1996; Chatterjee 1986; 1989; Nairn 1975). In the process of nation-building, the Greenlandic language (Kalaallisut) is a critical signifier in the delicate balancing act between traditions and modernity. Promoting the status of the Greenlandic language has become a central means of maintaining Greenlandic identity and culture while being part of

the modern world. According to one participant, the right to one's own language is imperative, but so is being "part of the whole of the world," which implies thinking globally and following "what's going on with the rest of the world." Paying attention to the outside world is necessary, the participant argued, because "we cannot just look inside ourselves and have the idea that we can develop our country only of our own premise" (interview with a municipal leader, 8 April 2013). As a newly elected premier, Hammond offered the metaphor of an airplane to describe the way she wanted to run Greenland: one wing of the plane is Inuit identity, traditions, and values, and the other wing is global influence and interaction with various partners (interview, 11 April 2013). According to the metaphor, finding the compatibility (and thus balance) between the Inuit identity and global influence will make Greenlanders globalized, modern people.

In some ways, the political situation in Greenland, with its deep-seated aspiration for independence, corresponds more to the overseas colonies of Asia and Africa that gained independence in the 1960s and 1970s than other Indigenous peoples.⁷ This is particularly evident in its current political discourse which in a number of ways resembles postcolonial, modern nation-building. Greenland resembles the classic scenario of postcolonial nationalism. For postcolonial nationalism and nation-building, the biggest enemy is not "foreignness" but rather "backwardness" (Zubaida 1988).

The common colonial portrayal of non-western peoples involves representing them as stuck in timeless tradition and therefore unable to meet the (western) standards of governance and statehood. In order to justify independence, the political elite of emerging nations are required to present themselves as modern (Chatterjee 1986). Greenland is no exception, and the performance of modernity is particularly clear in the way in which the growing divide between urban and rural Greenland is highlighted by elites in the capital. In popular discourse, a dichotomy is created in which Nuuk and a handful of other larger towns represent modernity while small settlements are symbols of timeless tradition if not backwardness (cf. Petersen 1995). Several participants shared a view according to which people in small communities were used to "waiting for someone to come and tell them what to do."

There are two Inuit discourses of sovereignty in Greenland: the discourse of shared, overlapping sovereignties emerging from the global Indigenous self-determination movement, and the Westphalian conception of sovereignty predicated on statehood, modern nation-building, and exclusive jurisdiction of territory. The first is promoted by Inuit NGOs, particularly the ICC, with an emphasis on the fact that the Inuit are an Indigenous people across the Arctic. The second is advanced by the formal political apparatus including the Parliament and Government of Greenland. Both discourses represent decolonization that for some Inuit Greenlanders signifies formal separation from Denmark and for others, a more profound transformation of colonial norms and values.

For some Greenlanders, the two discourses of sovereignty are mutually exclusive. When asked about the absence of the discourse of Indigenous rights in Greenlandic political discourse, the ICC Greenland representative remarked: "Because they are mistakenly taking Greenland as a state... But I think it's a wrong approach." For him, "nationalism and Indigenous rights are two completely different things" evident, for example, in the leading party's (Siumut) nationalistic ideology of independence which is "not compatible with the principles of the UNDRIP" (interview with

ICC Greenland representative, 22 March 2013). A central UNDRIP principle frequently overlooked by Greenland's political elite is free, prior, and informed consent, which is essential if Greenland is successfully going to develop its mineral resources for the benefit of the entire country, including the remote settlements and individuals at risk of marginalization or oppression.

The approval and endorsement of UNDRIP in 2007 undoubtedly represented the Indigenous challenge to Westphalian sovereignty, as suggested by Pitty and Smith (2011). I contend that Greenland poses yet another Indigenous challenge to Westphalian sovereignty – Indigenous Westphalian sovereignty where the two Inuit discourses of sovereignty converge. By no means it is a straightforward undertaking and there certainly are incongruities, but in many ways, it has already been unfolding for decades. Ultimately, the success of Indigenous Westphalian sovereignty will be measured in Greenlanders' ability to reconcile their endeavor for independence with Indigenous rights and self-determination which stress sustainable development of resources and promotion of cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and economies.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined conceptions of sovereignty and implementation of self-determination in Greenland. The political vision of an independent Greenland has long animated Greenlandic society. Negotiating an agreement with Denmark and passing the Self-Government Act in 2009 has made the widely shared vision of independence a concrete prospect that can be achieved through a referendum in Greenland. Another significant aspect of the Self-Government Act is Greenland securing exclusive subsurface rights to its territory. Political independence requires economic self-sufficiency. In Greenland, this implies an aggressive push for developing its extensive mineral resources, which are becoming more accessible due to accelerating climate change melting Greenland's ice sheet.

Yet there are considerable concerns about public engagement, consultation, and the transparency of the government and multinational companies. Greenlanders, their organizations, and NGOs have called for greater compliance with the norm of free, prior, and informed consent. Greenland has also become a subject of global geopolitical tensions and power struggles by major states racing to control and access the Arctic's resources and increasingly navigable waters. In this context of contested Arctic sovereignty, Greenlanders are advancing their own form, what I have called "Indigenous Westphalian Sovereignty," a unique approach to self-determination in the Indigenous world. This is a difficult endeavor with internal dissensions and complications, including the risk of new forms of dependencies. Indigenous Westphalian sovereignty also challenges the notion that Indigenous self-determination is limited to non-secession.

NOTES

- 1 An NGO established in 1977 to represent the Inuit across the Arctic with regional offices in Greenland, Canada, Alaska, and Chukotka, Russia, the ICC's key policy areas have included Inuit rights and self-determination and the protection of Arctic environment.

Through the ICC, the Inuit have also been at the forefront of the international advocacy for Indigenous self-determination since the 1970s, including the drafting and passing the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

- 2 On the qualified recognition of tribal sovereignty in the United States, see, for example, Wilkins (1998).
- 3 The legal term “the people of Greenland” refers not only to the Inuit but encompasses the entire population of the country, although Inuit form a great majority of Greenland’s population (88 percent).
- 4 On Chinese influence in Greenland, see Simpson (2018). On Russian influence in the Arctic possibly behind the US interest in Greenland, see Breum (2019).
- 5 Following an election upset on 6 April 2021, Kim Kielsen (Siumut Party) ended his term as premier and was replaced by Múte Bourup Egede (Inuit Ataqatigiit). Mining of uranium and rare earth minerals was a major election issue.
- 6 There are other states such as Bolivia where Indigenous peoples form a majority. Bolivia, however, became independent when it was still ruled by a small non-Indigenous elite.
- 7 Ironically, the Danish leadership is not keen on placing Greenland on the same plane as the postcolonial countries of the global South. Upon learning about the US aid package, some Danish MPs were outraged by the foreign aid, which suggests that Greenland is a developing country, stating “But Greenland is not a developing country. It is a western democracy. I think [the aid] is reprehensible” (*The Guardian* 2020).

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