

The Prospects of Independence for Greenland, between Energy Resources and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (with Some Comparative Remarks on Nunavut, Canada)

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Abstract

In a comparative view of the Arctic, Greenland is the only autonomous territory that has the possibility of legally reaching the status of full independence. The funding of the increasing autonomy and, ultimately, of the independence of Greenland is acquired largely from the revenues of mining operations and, more generally, from the exploitation of natural energy sources. However, one must consider the special conditions of the indigenous Inuit, torn between the desire to participate in the development of the Arctic regions, with the related socio-economic benefits, and the willingness not to abandon the traditional lifestyles that are the basis of their indigenous culture.

Keywords

Reinforced Autonomy of Greenland, Exploitation of Natural Resources (Oil, Gas, Uranium), Rights of the Inuit People

1. Introduction

The present study intends to examine the prospects of independence of Greenland, at a time when tensions to independence occur in many areas of the world. To remain in the field of western countries, we can think in fact to the recent cases of Catalonia in Spain and Scotland in the UK. The study will also serve to identify the most appropriate solutions to be prepared in case of emergence of tendencies towards independence, with emphasis on the abstract models and the concrete systems of the unified state, the regional state and the federal state. The methodology uses both the instruments of comparison and those of legal anthropology, with regard in the latter

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case to the condition of indigenous peoples, namely the Inuit of Greenland. The same methodology, therefore, is multidisciplinary, moving at the intersection of law, politics and anthropology.

2. From the Home Rule of 1979 to the Law on Self-Government of 2009: The Long March towards the (Possible) Independence of Greenland

Since 1721, Greenland has been linked to the Kingdom of Denmark. In 1953 the status of Greenland went from colony to a part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Only with the law on the autonomy of Greenland (Home Rule Act) of 1979, there was a key transfer of power from Denmark to Greenland. The transferred competences concern mainly the areas of education, health, environment and fisheries. The Parliament and the Government of Greenland were also created. It should be noted that all the inhabitants of Greenland, on the basis of the Home Rule of 1979, had the right to vote, both active and passive, and therefore certainly not only the indigenous people (Inuit, sing. Inuk/Inuq) but also the “ethnic” Danes and other non-indigenous Greenlanders. Ultimately, the institutions of government of Greenland could not be defined an ethnic government, at least from a strictly legal point of view, because in fact these were not representative institutions for only indigenous people (i.e., the Inuit). Since, however, the native Inuit make up the majority of the population of Greenland, about 89 percent (Sejersen & Thomsen, 2015), it follows that we were at least facing a *de facto* ethnic government. Of special relevance is also the provision, contained in the Home Rule of 1979 and subsequently maintained, concerning the transfer from Denmark to Greenland of a substantial share of economic resources available for the public authorities of Greenland. For example, in 2013, Denmark transferred to Greenland a total sum of 3.6 billion Danish kroner, on the total economic resources available, in that year, for Greenland that amounted to 6.5 billion crowns; the difference between the Danish economic transfers and the total budget of Greenland derived primarily from fishing.

The first stage of the autonomy of Greenland, represented by the Home Rule of 1979, was considered insufficient by the people of Greenland, which consequently pushed the Government of Greenland to set up a Commission for the Greenland Self-Government, which has carried out his duties from 2000 to 2003. On the basis of the final report published by the Commission in 2003, a new Commission, which took the name of the Greenlandic-Danish Commission on Self-Government and whose members were appointed by both the Government of Greenland that the Government of Denmark, was created in 2004. By incorporating the results of the Greenlandic-Danish Commission, the National Parliament of the Kingdom of Denmark approved on June 12th 2009 the law on the self-government of Greenland (the law came into force on June 21st of the same year). Previously, the draft law on the reinforced autonomy for Greenland prepared by the Greenlandic-Danish Commission was put to the vote by referendum in Greenland; the referendum, held on November 25th 2008, registered 75 percent of votes in favor (with a participation in the vote of 72 percent of those eligible).

The new law on self-government, or reinforced autonomy, of Greenland contains very relevant provisions. In particular, it recognizes the existence of a people of Greenland, which holds, on the basis of international law, both the right to self-determination (internal) and the right to independence (or external self-determination)¹, provided in the latter case that is the people of Greenland to manifest his will to that effect (Duranti, 2009: p. 41; Duranti, 2010; Alfredsson, 2013; du Castel & Brito, 2014; Belleli, 2015; Breum, 2015). It would be, on the other hand, the first “Inuit State” in human history (Nuttall, 2008). Of great importance, in this renewed institutional framework, is also the prediction of Greenlandic as the official language of Greenland (although Dane remains for now a *de facto* official language).

However, there are still areas of uncertainty on the exact determination of the competences assigned to the public authorities of Greenland in accordance with the law on reinforced autonomy of 2009. This particularly applies to the field of international relations (Ackrén & Jakobsen, 2015; Krarup, 2015). The Government of Greenland, in fact, can now conclude, on behalf of the Kingdom of Denmark (and, therefore, in partnership with Denmark), international agreements with foreign states and with international organizations, provided of course that such agreements relate exclusively to Greenland (and not, therefore, to the remaining parts of the Kingdom, which are Denmark and the Faroe Islands) (Skaale, 2004; Ackrén, 2006). Competence in foreign policy, as well as security (including the military force), however, remained in the hands of Denmark; it follows that Greenland authorities are nonetheless bound to comply with the international obligations assumed by the Kingdom of Denmark, even when they concern primarily Greenland, as it might be for negotiations or agreements relating to

¹For a recent attempt to answer the classic question: why has autonomy been accepted in certain cases, but refused in others? see Abushov (2015).

fishing or climate change. Ultimately, the autonomy of Greenland is limited by the need to respect both the Danish Constitution and the law on self-government of Greenland as well as the international agreements entered into by the Kingdom of Denmark. We are very far, therefore, from the so-called permanent idea of sovereignty, which is the prerequisite of any independent as well as original legal system, and which consists primarily in the “competence of competences” (Mattioni, 2012). Thirty-two subjects, however, have now been transferred from Denmark to Greenland, in accordance with the current law on reinforced autonomy of 2009. They cover, among other things, mineral resources, from the granting of the licenses to the (potentially relevant) economic benefits that derive from them, the latter, however, not in an integral manner; hence, the emergence of problematic aspects (which will be examined in detail in the next paragraph), as well as the need for cooperation between the Danish Government and the Government of Greenland, in accordance with the instructions contained in the important document entitled “Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands: Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for the Arctic 2011-2020” (Sanchez Galera, 2014: p. 91), adopted in August 2011 (Kingdom of Denmark, 2011) by the central authorities of Copenhagen in collaboration with peripheral/territorial ones of Nuuk (Greenland) and Tórshavn (Faroe Islands).

In any case, it is clear that, due to a reduction, if not an elimination of the transfer of financial resources from Greenland to Denmark, becomes crucial, in view of the independence of Greenland, acquire other financial resources, which can result—at least in the future—by extraction of minerals.

That said, in the following paragraphs I will focus especially on two aspects, namely the exploitation of natural resources and the status of indigenous peoples, with some comparisons to the Canadian experience (Nunavut Territory).

3. The Exploitation of Energy Resources (Oil and Gas Primarily, But Also Uranium)

The territory (including offshore areas) of Greenland is particularly rich in natural resources. Especially oil and gas come into consideration (Cassotta & Mazza, 2014; Graça, 2015; Koivurova, 2015a; Koivurova, Kämpylä, & Mikkola, 2015; Lindqvist, 2015; Ulfbeck, Møllmann, & Mortensen, 2016). It is estimated that 11 percent of energy resources derived from oil and gas that are currently present in the Arctic region are in Greenland. On the other hand, the estimates indicate that 13 percent of the world’s oil and 30 percent of world’s gas resources are in the Arctic². It follows a great importance of the Arctic both from a geopolitical and a geoeconomic point of view (Koivurova, 2015b; Jakobson & Melvin, 2017), or more precisely—for the present purposes—from the geoenergetic perspective (Shadian, 2014a). In 1978, and with increasing intensity since 2005, international mining companies began to demand (and obtain) licenses for the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas in Greenland. These are companies from Denmark, Norway, Germany, Great Britain, USA, Canada and, more recently, the People’s Republic of China, India, and the Czech Republic. And already it has started to reflect, for example, on the problems of adaptation of Chinese workers mining in Greenland (Petersen, 2015).

The fact, however, is that economic gains from mining operations are not fully devolved to the Government of Greenland. In accordance with the law on Greenland’s reinforced autonomy of 2009, it proceeds as follows. The amounts resulting from the exploitation of mineral resources are attributed to the Greenlandic Government with the limit of seventy-five million Danish kroner. As regards the surplus, half is assigned to the Government of Greenland and the other half to the Government of Denmark. However, the quota allocated to the Danish Government also determines an equal decrease in annual transfers from Denmark to Greenland. It is clear, therefore, that the increase in income from mining activities for Greenland causes a progressive decrease in economic transfers from Denmark to Greenland. That is not all. If, in fact, the amounts collected annually by Greenland from the exploitation of mineral resources exceed double the annual economic transfer from Denmark to Greenland, the Act on the reinforced autonomy of Greenland establishes that the annual subsidy granted by Denmark is completely canceled, and also that Denmark and Greenland must proceed to a new phase of negotiation concerning the distribution of the economic gains.

Global warming currently opens the way to multiple research projects and to the exploitation of mineral resources, in a manner which is certainly simpler (and cheaper) than in the past. But there are at least two orders of problems (which are, moreover, interconnected), namely, on the one hand, the risk of pollution and imbalance to

²According to Ulmer (2014: p. 163), “The U.S. Geological Survey and others have tried to estimate what is the region’s oil and gas potential and have concluded that it is considerable. The USGS report released in late May that said 30% of the world’s undiscovered gas and 13% of its undiscovered oil are estimated to be located north of the Arctic Circle”.

the environment and the ecosystem³, as well as, on the other hand, the protection of traditional lifestyles (and, more generally, the culture) of indigenous peoples (Mazza, 2012; Abate & Warner, 2013; Gladun, 2015; Kadenic, 2015; Mazza, 2015a; Winther, 2015). Furthermore, we must consider that the indigenous peoples are still now habitually stereotyped as local, traditional, communal, etc., and this happens as part of the oppositions, often quite acritical, between global and local, modern and traditional, Western and indigenous, and so on. The truth is, on the contrary, that indigenous communities do not oppose in any case drilling, exploitation of natural resources, etc.; indigenous peoples, at least many of them, want to participate in the future revenues from the industrial extractive activities, provided these activities are environmentally sustainable and they can decide on their realization (Kondratieva & Lukin, 2015; Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2015). Moreover, the economic sustainability of environmental sustainability should be taken (probably) into account as well if we want to avoid the risk of confusing the final goal with the current reality. In other words, there are some (or, better said, many) problematic aspects of the strategy for which the gains of mining operations (especially from oil and gas, without forgetting, for example, uranium) could be the main resources to “finance” the independence of Greenland (Dingman, 2014; Erdal, 2014; Strandsbjerg, 2014).

The general impression, also, is that the debate is very intense, even in consideration of requests for consultation, information and transparency about the mega-projects of industrial extraction of minerals (Nuttall, 2012), but the practical implications are for now very limited. The Government of Greenland, in the document containing the “Greenland’s Oil and Mineral Strategy 2014-2018”, expresses an optimistic approach. It says, in fact, “The Government of Greenland’s goal with the mineral resources sector is clear. It wants to promote prosperity and welfare by creating new income and employment opportunities in the area of mineral resources activities”. On the other hand, the approach endorsed by both the Economic Council of Greenland in 2013 and the Committee for Greenlandic Mineral Resources to the Benefit of Society in 2014 is more cautious. This is because, ultimately, it is true that the number of licenses granted in Greenland for the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources has increased from 2002 to 2011, but from the following year there was on the contrary a downward trend; furthermore, the world price of minerals has fallen, and this does not encourage international investors to place capital in the sector, so it must be stated that there are currently no active mines in Greenland (Poppel, 2014).

4. The Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic: From Stakeholders to Rights-Holders (and Future-Makers)

Let us ask ourselves, at this point, what is the role of indigenous peoples, which is the position that it is assigned to them—and that, rather, it could (should) be taken by them—in relation to the problems of climate adaptation, the right to development and the human and social sustainability of indigenous cultures. This profile of investigation appears to be of great interest in general, that is, with regard to the indigenous peoples, than in particular, i.e. in relation to the Arctic indigenous peoples and, more specifically, to the Inuit of Greenland. As we saw above (in paragraph 1), the Inuit are the majority of the population of Greenland, whereas—according to estimates compiled by the Arctic Council—the indigenous people of the Arctic region—which have a total of approximately 500,000—are about ten percent of the total population of the Arctic (that is, those who live permanently above the northern polar circle). In other words, the indigenous people represent a minority of the overall population of the Arctic, but in the case of Greenland (now, on the basis of the statute of reinforced autonomy of 2009—above examined—on the road to independence) they form the majority of the population.

Let us start from a fact common to the Arctic indigenous peoples, namely the past subjection to forms of colonial domination. From this condition, since the sixties of the last century and with increasing intensity in the seventies, the claims for recognition of indigenous collective rights have originated, both with regard to self-government than the use of land (including inland waters, coastal sea and both marine that terrestrial subsoil). These claims are meant to enable the indigenous peoples of the Arctic to get out of the condition of marginal people, or rather marginalized people (Dahl, 2012), to which they were condemned by history, and in particular by the legacy of the colonial past.

Many steps forward, of course, have been made. In northern European countries, namely Finland, Norway and Sweden, Saami Parliaments were created (Stepien, Petrétei, & Koivurova, 2015), for the ethnic representation of the Saami (formerly known as Lapps, but this name is now considered derogatory) in each of the three

³As it is usual in the complex interrelationship between environment and development (Nespor, 2015).

Scandinavian countries (conversely, the demand for a Sami parliament-type institution in Russia has not until now been accepted by the authorities of the Russian Federation; Berg-Nordlie, 2015). In Alaska (USA), since 1971 the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) recognized the land rights of the Inuit (or Eskimos, but this name has more or less the same negative connotation over view for the Lapps). In the Arctic Council (Axworthy, Koivurova, & Hasanat, 2012; Hasanat, 2012; Pedersen, 2012; Hasanat, 2013; Shadian, 2014b; Graczyk & Koivurova, 2015; Steinberg & Dodds, 2015; Nord, 2016) sit as permanent members the representatives of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. In Canada, the Territory of Nunavut (created in 1999) (Loukacheva, 2007; Rodon, 2014a) is mainly inhabited by indigenous people, who make up 85 percent of the population and constitute, as is the case in Greenland (see paragraph 1), the largest portion of the population. Both in Nunavut than in Greenland, therefore, the territorial government (regional/local) is an ethnic government, not *de jure* but *de facto*. In particular, then, the reinforced autonomy for Greenland introduced in 2009 provides for the possible independence of Greenland, and so is the forefront of the affirmation of the right of the Arctic indigenous peoples to (external) self-determination. Exactly the approval of the new statute of autonomy for Greenland marks, in the final, the passage of the condition of belonging to an indigenous people (Inuit) from that of *stakeholders* to that of *rights-holders*.

Of course, these results have not come without effort, and indeed are the outcome of many years of “lobbying” of indigenous peoples internationally. The intention was to link, in international negotiations, environmental issues, climate change and human rights of indigenous peoples (Fenge & Fenge, 2013; Roschmann, 2013; Mazza, 2014: p. 27; Anton, 2015; Heinämäki, 2015). This was highlighted, in particular, during the “Arctic dialogues” promoted by the European Commission in Brussels, with the participation (since 2010) of representatives of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic (also coming from outside Europe, as is the case of the Inuit of Alaska and Canada), and more generally by the EU policy regarding the Arctic (Scarpa, 2013; Airoidi, 2014; Scarpa, 2015). This innovative approach, which considers the Arctic indigenous peoples no longer simply as *stakeholders* (though with their own “visibility”), but as *rights-holders* directly engaged in building their future, has even confined the condition of the Arctic non-indigenous population in the background. The focal point was the refusal of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic to be considered as simply a minority (Mazza, 2015b), that is, as a part (minority) of the population of the Arctic. They are, instead, a people, and as such are entitled, on the one hand, to self-government (within the state or, in the specific case of Greenland, with also the possibility of obtaining full independence in the future), as well as, on other side, to carry out activities directly relevant in terms of international cooperation.

An important outcome of this approach is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted in 2007 (Allen & Xanthaki, 2011; Thomsen, 2013; Wille, 2015). It expressly provides for the right to self-determination for the indigenous people, in connection with their right to economic, social and cultural development. The collective rights of the indigenous peoples on the lands (including energy and natural resources, both of the soil that of the subsoil), and also the right to be informed and consulted prior to the implementation of projects affecting their territories of traditional settlement (not excluding sacred sites, as part of the traditional cultural properties; Butzier & Stevenson, 2014), until the establishment of the necessity of “free, prior and informed consent” of indigenous peoples (and their representatives), are also contemplated in the UNDRIP (Jerimiassen & Lyberth, 2015). As we see, these are provisions that have a significant impact on the traditional concept of state sovereignty, both in terms of the internal sovereignty and of the international relations, and this probably explains the considerable delay of the final adoption of the UNDRIP (which, however, is an international instrument of soft law, that so is not binding on national states), which occurred decades after the start of the discussions within the United Nations (Dahl, 2012; Lindroth, 2015).

More than many other considerations, a single example illustrates the tensions around the concept of sovereignty arising from the request for recognition of the rights of the Arctic indigenous peoples. In May 2008, the five Arctic coastal states (so-called Arctic Five, A5), namely the USA (Alaska), Canada, Norway, Denmark (Greenland) and Russia, signed in Ilulissat (Greenland), the Declaration of Ilulissat, with which they take note of the effects of the global change (warming) on Arctic Ocean, and undertake to respect the international rules of sovereignty of coastal States (with particular regard to the provisions of the international law of the sea; Moleenaar, Elferink, & Rothwell, 2013), even for the resolution of interstate disputes which may arise (Winkelmann, 2008; De Pooter, 2009: p. 93; Borgia, 2012: p. 195; Rossi, 2014, who writes “Decolonization may have ended, but territorial temptation continues” see at p. 504). These are issues of great importance, which also affect (some)

non-coastal states, such as the People's Republic of China (Chen, 2012; Hong, 2014; Cassotta, Hossain, Ren, & Goodsite, 2015; Lundestad & Tunsjø, 2015)⁴ or Japan (Tonami, 2014; Lunde, Yang, & Stensdal, 2016).

Now, it is of great importance—as regards the aim of this work—to remember that in April 2009, following the Declaration of Ilulissat adopted less than a year before, on the initiative of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC; Schoeppner, 2015) the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic was approved. This document was signed by the indigenous delegates from Greenland (Denmark), Alaska (United States of America), Canada and Chukotka (Russia); it was presented on April 29 of that year, during the sixth ministerial meeting (with the presence of representatives of the eight Arctic countries, so-called “A8”, namely Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Canada, USA and Russia) of the Arctic Council that was held in Tromsø (Northern Norway). In the Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic, the representatives of the Inuit people take positions, partly critical, against the Ilulissat Declaration of 2008 (in the preparation of which they had not been invited to take part), exactly in terms of the sovereignty of states. They say, as a matter of fact, that there is the need to consider also the views of the indigenous people. The Circumpolar Inuit, in particular, are not prejudicially hostile in respect of the realization of industrial extractive activities in the Arctic, currently made possible as a result of the gradual retreat of the ice as a consequence of global warming (Luedtke, 2015). They more specifically want to be able to participate in decisions relating to such activities, that are related to the traditional lands of indigenous people, their way of life followed from time immemorial, their prospects for sustainable and durable development, in a word to the preservation of their culture in a world that changes. Therefore, since the Circumpolar/Arctic indigenous peoples feel and want to be an active part in future decisions concerning the Arctic, they advance requests not only for the recognition of their collective rights, but also of involvement in political decision making; it is not enough, that is, being now become “visible” as stakeholders, they now demand to be recognized as collective rights-holders. The pan-Inuit Declaration on Sovereignty in the Arctic of 2009, therefore, integrates the Ilulissat Declaration of 2008, insofar as it considers the right to development of indigenous people as an essential part of the right to self-government of the people itself. In other words, the sovereignty of the people, declined as sovereignty of the indigenous people, is the foundation (and limit) of the same state sovereignty.

5. What Are the Prospects, Then, for Greenland, Its Institutional Framework and the Inuit Who Live There? (with Some Comparative Observations Regarding the Case of Nunavut, Canada)

As we saw earlier (in paragraph 2), the new statute of reinforced autonomy for Greenland has extended institutional responsibilities of the Greenland's authorities, but at the same time introduced mechanisms by which the annual contribution awarded by Denmark to Greenland is expected to decrease gradually. In fact, this decrease has already occurred; for example, from 2010 to 2012, it diminished of fifty million Danish kroner. In addition, the increase of the competences of the public authorities of Greenland also depends on decisions that belong to the same Greenland's authorities. Here, too, an example may clarify the concept. While the Parliament (*Inatsisartut*) and the Government (*Naalakkersuisut*) of Greenland have been instituted, the administration of justice remains for now into the responsibility of the authorities of Denmark, although the statutes provide for the possible establishment of courts managed directly by the authorities of the Greenland, also with regard to the criminal proceedings. The fact is that, for the establishment of (any future) courts of Greenland, as well as to ask the transfer from Denmark to Greenland of additional administrative competencies and accountabilities, the Greenland's authorities obviously must have adequate financial resources. The economic situation, however, is not favorable, and in Greenland is currently under discussion the problem of finding new financial revenues, against a decrease (see above) of economic transfers annually disposed by the central authorities of Copenhagen.

One possible way out of the crisis, given the lack of sufficient financial revenue produced by fishing and tourism (Sejersen, 2015: p. 31), is represented, according to the future predictions made by the main institutions involved in that field in Greenland—in particular, the Economic Council, the Commission for the Welfare and Taxes and the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources—by the implementation of the large-scale projects concerning the economic exploitation of natural resources and energy available in Greenland. It is, primarily, of

⁴The growing interest of mainland China for the Arctic-related issues is testified, *inter alia*, by the 3rd China-Nordic Arctic Cooperation Symposium 2015, held at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (上海国际问题研究院) from 26 to 28 May 2015, whose third session was entitled *The Framing and Implementation of Chinese and Nordic Arctic Policies* (Deng & Yang, 2014).

oil and gas, but also uranium⁵, hydropower⁶ and solar energy, etc. (Government of Greenland, 2005; Government of Greenland, 2014a; Government of Greenland, 2014b). The prospect would be, therefore, that of the so-called hyper-industrialization. But uncertainties remain because, if it is true that in this way the indigenous peoples would be no longer, at least in Greenland, “victims” of progress, but rather co-producers of the development, it is also true that even the natural/environmental disasters are usually co-products from actions taken by communities, and are therefore socially co-products. The right to socioeconomic development, to political and institutional self-government, to the eventual independence (the latter largely financed by the exploitation of mineral resources) must then come to terms with the limits imposed by cultural ecology and, above all, from the political ecology, i.e. ultimately with the requirements for the sustainability of the indigenous cultures of Greenland. This happens also because the prospect of independence of Greenland seems to actually overcome the doubts that regard the granting of greater autonomy to the territories of traditional settlement of the indigenous peoples, for example, in relation to the autonomy of Nunavut in Canada (see above, in paragraph 4) and on the basis of the addresses of the so-called post-positivist research on decolonization (Körber & Volquardsen, 2014; Rud, 2014; Joncas, 2015). Such doubts concern the possibility that the territorial autonomies are nothing more, in these cases, than post-colonial structures whose function is to ensure—according to the criteria of rationality and legal certainty of the Western Legal Tradition—the *control* of development and, above all, of the exploitation of natural resources of the territories themselves (Rodon, 2014b; Lindroth & Sinevaara-Niskanen, 2015; Reinert & Benjaminsen, 2015; Tuori, 2015).

This happens, without prejudice to the differences which will be discussed in the conclusion, both in the federal states than in the unitary or weakly decentralized states such as Denmark, where there are not regions. It is obvious, in fact, that an ethnic government, at least *de facto* if not *de jure* (see also what was said in the previous paragraph) exists both in Greenland than in Nunavut.

6. Conclusion

The case examined of Greenland served to test the possibility that the various states have to counter, or otherwise take action with respect to demands for full independence. Comparing in a global perspective (Malloy & Palermo, 2015) the experience of Greenland and the Nunavut shows that the Federal Government, in this case Canada, has more chances to address the issues of greater autonomy of the territories without going to secede, while a state with weak decentralization as Denmark had to choose the path of possible independence of Greenland, in the absence of legal instruments that allow to enlarge ordinarily ethnic autonomy, without resorting to disciplines derogatory in nature and extraordinary as those provided by the Statute of special autonomy for Greenland of 2009.

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⁵A law passed on October 25th 2013 by Greenlandic Parliament, with 15 votes in favor and 14 against (McGwin, 2013), has removed the previous ban, which lasted twenty-five years (having been introduced in 1988), to the extraction of uranium (Bennet, 2013); but there are, still, oppositions and dissents (McGwin, 2015). Similar is the socio-political situation in Nunavut, about the exploitation of uranium as an energy resource (Pehora, 2015).

⁶The enormous potential for the production of hydroelectric power is only minimally exploited in Greenland; consider, for example, that in Iceland 100 percent of the electricity production comes from renewable energies (Kristjánssdóttir, 2015).

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