

ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS: POLICY ANALYSIS

Policy Analysis for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

I. ISSUE BRIEF

The Arctic region represents a critical strategic priority for the Kingdom of Denmark through Greenland's geographic position, resource potential, and geopolitical significance in an era of intensifying great power competition. The Kingdom of Denmark comprises three constituent countries—Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroe Islands—unified under the Danish Crown but possessing varying degrees of autonomy.[1] Greenland, with 2.17 million square kilometers of territory (80% ice-covered) and 56,000 inhabitants,[2] positions the Kingdom as a major Arctic coastal state despite metropolitan Denmark's location in Northern Europe outside the Arctic Circle.

Denmark's legal position on Arctic sovereignty rests on: uncontested sovereignty over Greenland territory (established through Norwegian cession in 1814, affirmed by Permanent Court of International Justice in 1933 *Legal Status of Eastern Greenland* case);[3] exclusive economic zone and continental shelf rights under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), ratified by Denmark in 2004;[4] and extended continental shelf claims over approximately 895,000 square kilometers of Arctic seabed submitted to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) in 2014, based on Lomonosov Ridge constituting natural prolongation of Greenlandic continental landmass.[5] These claims overlap substantially with Russian and Canadian submissions over the same underwater features,[6] requiring either CLCS determinations or negotiated maritime boundary delimitation.

Current realities reflect multiple intersecting transformations. Climate change dramatically alters Greenlandic conditions—Arctic temperatures rising twice as fast as global averages,[7] Greenland ice sheet losing approximately 280 billion tons annually (contributing to global sea level rise),[8] and ice-free coastal waters expanding accessibility for shipping, fishing, and resource extraction. This physical transformation creates unprecedented economic opportunities: potential hydrocarbon reserves (U.S. Geological Survey estimates Greenland offshore areas may contain significant undiscovered oil and gas),[9] mineral resources including rare earth elements at Kvanefjeld, zinc at Citronen Fjord, and iron ore at Isua,[10] expanded fisheries as species migrate northward seeking colder waters, and tourism growth as accessibility improves.

Simultaneously, geopolitical competition intensifies. Russian Arctic militarization—reopened bases, advanced missile deployments, Northern Fleet expansion[11]—creates security concerns despite geographic distance from Greenland. Chinese strategic interest manifests through: attempted infrastructure investments (three Greenlandic airport bids, mining project

proposals),[12] diplomatic engagement elevating Greenland-China relations, research stations and scientific cooperation, and broader "Polar Silk Road" vision integrating Arctic into Belt and Road Initiative.[13] U.S. security attention revives Cold War-era focus on Greenland's strategic position—Thule Air Base hosting critical missile warning systems and space surveillance,[14] renewed U.S. interest in Greenlandic infrastructure and resource development, and the 2019 Trump administration proposal to purchase Greenland (summarily rejected) highlighting American strategic perceptions.[15]

The Kingdom's constitutional structure creates unique governance complexities. Greenland achieved Home Rule in 1979 and expanded Self-Government in 2009,[16] granting Greenlandic authorities control over most domestic matters including resource management, while Denmark retains responsibility for foreign affairs, defense, and monetary policy. However, the Self-Government Act recognizes Greenlandic people's right to independence through referendum,[17] creating persistent independence discourse particularly among younger Greenlanders. The Naalakkersuisut (Greenland Government) pursues economic development enabling eventual financial independence from Danish annual block grants (currently approximately DKK 3.9 billion/\$570 million, representing roughly one-third of Greenland's public budget),[18] generating tensions between Copenhagen's security concerns and Nuuk's development priorities.

Indigenous rights and environmental sustainability create additional policy dimensions. Greenland's population is approximately 90% Greenlandic Inuit,[19] with constitutionally protected linguistic and cultural rights and international recognition under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (endorsed by Denmark in 2009).[20] Resource development proposals face competing imperatives: economic opportunities providing employment and revenue versus environmental risks threatening subsistence hunting and fishing livelihoods, particularly given Greenlandic cultural and economic dependence on marine mammals, fish stocks, and traditional practices.[21]

The fundamental policy challenge lies in: balancing Greenlandic self-determination aspirations with Kingdom unity and Copenhagen's foreign policy and security interests; managing great power competition (particularly Chinese influence versus U.S./NATO security requirements) without alienating Greenlandic partners or triggering external pressure; developing Greenlandic resources generating revenue and employment while respecting environmental sustainability and Indigenous rights; asserting extended continental shelf claims through UNCLOS processes requiring negotiated delimitation with Russia and Canada; and positioning Denmark/Greenland as responsible Arctic stakeholder demonstrating environmental leadership while defending sovereignty and economic interests.

II. STRATEGIC INTERESTS

Primary Interests:

Preservation of Kingdom territorial integrity and constitutional unity constitutes the paramount interest. Despite Greenlandic self-government and recognized independence rights, Copenhagen maintains strong interests in preserving the Kingdom structure: historical ties dating to 1721 Danish-Norwegian colonization (predating loss of Norway itself in 1814);[22] constitutional framework making Greenland integral to Kingdom identity as Arctic state; and geopolitical significance where Greenland's territory and location provide

Denmark influence in Arctic affairs, NATO relevance, and great power attention vastly exceeding what Denmark proper commands. Loss of Greenland would reduce Denmark to a small Northern European state with minimal strategic significance, losing Arctic Council membership, continental shelf claims, and geopolitical relevance.[23]

However, preservation requires managing, not suppressing, independence discourse. Heavy-handed opposition to Greenlandic self-determination would: violate Self-Government Act provisions recognizing independence rights; generate Greenlandic political backlash accelerating rather than preventing independence; and create international criticism (Indigenous rights violations, colonialism) damaging Denmark's reputation. Therefore, interest lies in maintaining Kingdom unity through Greenlandic consent achieved via: adequate financial support enabling economic development; respectful partnership on foreign policy and security matters; and demonstrating Kingdom membership benefits outweighing independence costs.

Extended continental shelf claims represent vital economic interests potentially worth billions in resource revenues. Denmark's 2014 CLCS submission claims 895,000 square kilometers of Arctic seabed beyond 200 nautical miles EEZ, based on geological evidence that Lomonosov Ridge constitutes natural prolongation of Greenlandic continental shelf.[24] Approval would grant Denmark/Greenland sovereign rights over seabed resources including potential hydrocarbons, minerals, and rare earth elements. However, claims overlap with Russian (claiming same ridge as extension from Russian Arctic) and Canadian (claiming ridge extends from Canadian Arctic Archipelago) submissions,[25] requiring resolution through: CLCS scientific determination potentially approving overlapping claims necessitating subsequent negotiated delimitation; or direct bilateral/trilateral negotiations establishing maritime boundaries. Extended shelf resources could provide: substantial revenue streams for Greenland reducing Danish subsidy dependence; economic foundation for potential Greenlandic independence (making independence financially viable); strategic leverage in great power competition (resource access as bargaining chip); and demonstration of effective Arctic sovereignty supporting broader Danish Arctic positioning.

Secondary Interests:

Greenlandic economic development serves multiple Kingdom interests beyond resource revenue. Economic prosperity enables: social stability reducing pressures from unemployment, substance abuse, and other socioeconomic challenges affecting Greenlandic communities;[26] financial sustainability reducing Greenlandic dependence on Danish block grants (current DKK 3.9 billion annually)[27] and making independence economically feasible if Greenlanders choose that path (preferably distant future after sustained development); political legitimacy for Kingdom structure where Greenlanders perceive material benefits from union; and demographic sustainability preventing youth emigration to Denmark (approximately 20% of Greenland-born Greenlanders reside in Denmark)[28] which would undermine Greenlandic society's long-term viability. However, development faces severe constraints: small population (56,000) limiting domestic market and labor pool; geographic challenges with settlements dispersed along coasts lacking road connections; extreme climate increasing construction and operational costs; limited infrastructure (ports, airports, telecommunications); and global commodity price volatility affecting mining/oil economics.

U.S. security partnership and NATO alliance obligations create vital defense and geopolitical interests. Thule Air Base, established 1951 under bilateral Denmark-U.S. agreement, hosts:[29] early warning radar systems detecting ballistic missile launches from Eurasia; space surveillance tracking satellites and space debris; and potential future missile defense installations. Thule's location in northwestern Greenland provides: strategic position monitoring Russian northern approaches; coverage of shortest great circle routes for potential Russian missile strikes on North America; and forward presence demonstrating NATO commitment to High North security. Denmark's NATO membership and U.S. alliance relationship depend substantially on Greenlandic real estate—Denmark's Article 5 security guarantee partly reflects Greenland's strategic value to U.S./NATO, while Denmark's ability to contribute to alliance security rests largely on providing access to Greenlandic territory. Maintaining close U.S. defense cooperation serves Danish interests through: security protection Denmark cannot provide independently (icebreaker support, surveillance, rapid response); political influence in Washington through strategic real estate provision; and alliance credibility demonstrating Danish value to NATO despite small military forces.

Arctic Council participation and regional cooperation frameworks serve diplomatic and normative interests. Denmark holds Arctic Council membership through Greenland, participating in multilateral cooperation on: environmental protection and climate research; sustainable development and Indigenous peoples' rights; emergency response and search-and-rescue coordination; and scientific cooperation.[30] Active Arctic Council engagement provides: platform for advancing Danish/Greenlandic positions on environmental standards and Indigenous rights; reputation as responsible Arctic steward contrasting with more militaristic or exploitative actors; relationship building with other Arctic states facilitating bilateral cooperation; and Indigenous involvement through Inuit Circumpolar Council (Greenland hosts ICC headquarters)[31] fulfilling participatory rights. However, Council limitations include security issue exclusion from mandate and consensus requirements enabling any member blocking initiatives.

Tertiary Interests:

Environmental leadership and climate action serve reputational and normative interests. Denmark positions itself as climate leader with ambitious emissions reduction targets and renewable energy development,[32] while Greenland faces climate change impacts firsthand through ice sheet melting, permafrost thawing, and ecosystem disruption. Arctic environmental stewardship provides: moral authority in climate negotiations; soft power and international reputation; domestic political support from environmental constituencies; and Indigenous community trust essential for development approvals. However, stewardship requires substantive policies potentially conflicting with economic interests—restrictions on oil/gas development, mining environmental standards, shipping regulations—creating tensions between environmental rhetoric and development imperatives.

Fisheries protection and sustainable marine resource management serve economic and food security interests. Greenlandic waters contain substantial fish stocks including Greenland halibut, cod, shrimp, and crab, generating export revenue exceeding DKK 5 billion annually (Greenland's largest economic sector).[33] Climate change drives species migration and ecosystem changes requiring: adaptive fisheries management responding to shifting stocks; protection of spawning areas and critical habitats; prevention of overfishing maintaining long-term sustainability; and monitoring of foreign fishing vessel activities in Greenlandic EEZ. Sustainable fisheries provide: ongoing revenue streams independent of volatile

mineral/oil markets; employment in coastal communities with limited alternatives; traditional livelihood protection for subsistence fishing; and demonstration of responsible resource management supporting Greenlandic governance credibility.

III. CONSTRAINTS

Constitutional-Political Constraints:

Greenlandic self-government creates jurisdictional complexities requiring coordination between Copenhagen and Nuuk on all Arctic policies. The 2009 Self-Government Act grants Greenland authority over: natural resources (including minerals, oil, gas, fish); environmental protection; economic development; and most domestic governance areas.[34] Denmark retains: foreign affairs (including international treaty negotiation); defense (though consultation required on Greenland-affecting decisions); monetary policy (Greenland uses Danish krone); and constitutional affairs. This division creates: consultation requirements where Copenhagen cannot unilaterally decide Arctic policies without Greenlandic input; potential conflicts where Danish security/foreign policy interests diverge from Greenlandic economic/development priorities; and implementation challenges where policies require both jurisdictions' cooperation. The Naalakkersuisut increasingly asserts independent positions in international forums (Arctic Council Indigenous Permanent Participants, direct engagement with foreign governments on investment) sometimes diverging from or complicating Danish official positions.[35]

Independence discourse constrains Danish policy flexibility. Approximately 68% of Greenlanders support eventual independence according to 2016 polling,[36] while Greenlandic political parties across spectrum endorse independence as long-term goal differing only on timeline and prerequisites. The Inuit Ataqatigiit party (left-wing, pro-independence) and Siumut (social democratic, independence when economically viable) dominate Greenlandic politics, both committed to independence principles.[37] Danish opposition to Greenlandic self-determination would be: politically counterproductive (strengthening independence sentiment); internationally illegitimate (violating Self-Government Act and Indigenous rights); and morally questionable (perpetuating colonialism). Therefore, Denmark must manage independence discourse through partnership rather than suppression, accepting eventual independence possibility while demonstrating Kingdom membership advantages. This constrains aggressive sovereignty assertion or security policies Greenlanders oppose, requiring consensus-building rather than unilateral Danish decisions.

Economic-Fiscal Constraints:

Greenlandic economic dependency on Danish subsidies creates structural vulnerabilities. The annual Danish block grant (DKK 3.9 billion/\$570 million) represents approximately one-third of Greenland's public budget,[38] funding essential services including healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social programs. Greenland's domestic revenue sources—primarily fisheries taxes and royalties, municipal taxes, and user fees—prove insufficient for current public spending levels. This dependency creates: Danish fiscal pressures where subsidies represent significant expense (though modest relative to overall Danish budget); Greenlandic economic vulnerability to Danish political changes potentially reducing transfers; and independence constraints where financial self-sufficiency remains prerequisite

for viable independence requiring sustained resource development revenue currently uncertain. The Self-Government Act's revenue-sharing provisions—Greenland retains initial resource revenues but Danish subsidies gradually reduce as revenues exceed thresholds[39]—create perverse incentives potentially discouraging resource development that would reduce subsidies more than generating net gains.

Resource development faces uncertain economics despite substantial potential. Greenlandic mineral and hydrocarbon resources face: extreme operational costs (Arctic conditions, remote locations, limited infrastructure); commodity price volatility (mining/oil projects viable only at high sustained prices); environmental approval challenges (stringent standards, climate concerns); limited domestic technical capacity requiring foreign companies and expertise; and small domestic market necessitating export focus vulnerable to global economic conditions. Multiple proposed projects failed economic viability tests: Alcoa aluminum smelter abandoned; various uranium and rare earth projects stalled; offshore oil exploration licenses relinquished after disappointing results.[40] Recent Greenlandic policy shifts—2021 ban on new uranium mining licenses, 2021 suspension of oil/gas exploration licensing pending environmental review[41]—reflect political prioritization of environmental concerns over resource revenue, potentially delaying economic development and independence timelines.

Infrastructure investment requirements vastly exceed available resources. Greenland needs: modern airports enabling intercontinental direct flights (current infrastructure requires Copenhagen connections for most international travel); expanded port facilities supporting mineral exports; telecommunications improvements including fiber optic cables and 5G coverage; housing construction addressing severe shortages in major towns; healthcare facilities; and inter-settlement transportation (helicopter, coastal shipping given lack of roads). Chinese companies' 2018 bids to construct three Greenlandic airports generated concerns about strategic dependencies,[42] illustrating infrastructure financing challenges and foreign influence risks. Total infrastructure needs estimated at billions of kroner over decades,[43] far exceeding Greenlandic domestic capacity and requiring external financing from Denmark, EU, international development banks, or potentially problematic sources (China) creating geopolitical complications.

Security-Geopolitical Constraints:

Great power competition creates influence and dependency risks. Chinese interest in Greenland manifests through: mining investment proposals (rare earth elements particularly attractive given Chinese current market dominance); infrastructure financing offers (airport construction bids); research cooperation and stations; diplomatic engagement including high-level visits; and broader Arctic strategy.[44] While Chinese investment could provide needed capital and economic development, it generates concerns: strategic dependencies where Chinese control of critical infrastructure (airports, ports, telecommunications) creates vulnerabilities; dual-use risks where civilian infrastructure enables military applications (surveillance, power projection); debt-trap dynamics comparable to Belt and Road experiences elsewhere; and Alliance tensions where U.S./NATO pressure Denmark to limit Chinese access to Greenlandic territory. The 2018 airport situation illustrated these tensions—U.S. intervention and Danish financing ultimately prevented Chinese construction.[45]

U.S. security demands potentially conflict with Greenlandic priorities. Thule Air Base operations create: local community impacts (environmental contamination, restricted land access); historical grievances (1953 forced relocation of Inughuit population never fully addressed);[46] and sovereignty sensitivities where permanent U.S. military presence on Greenlandic territory symbolizes limited Danish/Greenlandic control. Greenlanders increasingly question Thule arrangements and demand greater voice in security decisions affecting their territory.[47] Expanding U.S. military presence—additional facilities, increased troop rotations, new weapons systems—would likely face Greenlandic political opposition potentially constraining Danish alliance commitments. The 2019 Trump purchase proposal, though rejected, revealed U.S. strategic thinking viewing Greenland as separable from Denmark and potentially acquirable, generating lasting Greenlandic and Danish concerns about U.S. intentions.[48]

NATO Arctic strategy development creates participation versus neutrality tensions. As Arctic security competition intensifies, NATO develops High North operational concepts, exercises, and capabilities.[49] Danish participation supports alliance obligations and U.S. partnership, but risks: militarizing Arctic contrary to Denmark's preference for cooperative regional governance; provoking Russian responses escalating tensions; and generating Greenlandic opposition to military activities on their territory. Greenland's 1985 nuclear weapons-free zone policy (preventing nuclear weapons on Greenlandic territory during peacetime)[50] exemplifies local constraints on Danish security policy, while broader Greenlandic preferences lean toward Arctic demilitarization contradicting NATO military planning.

Environmental-Indigenous Rights Constraints:

Climate change creates both opportunities and existential threats. Ice sheet melting opens economic opportunities but generates: sea level rise contribution (Greenland ice sheet loss represents approximately 25% of current global sea level rise);[51] ecosystem disruption affecting wildlife populations supporting subsistence hunting; infrastructure damage from permafrost thawing and coastal erosion; cultural impacts where traditional practices (ice travel, certain hunting methods) become impossible; and global climate feedback risks where methane release from thawing tundra accelerates warming. Denmark's climate leadership positioning requires: emissions reductions including fossil fuel development restrictions; ice sheet preservation efforts; and climate adaptation investments in Greenlandic communities. However, climate policies potentially conflict with resource development—oil/gas extraction contributing to global emissions, mining operations disrupting ecosystems, shipping increasing black carbon deposits on ice accelerating melting.[52]

Indigenous rights create consultation and consent requirements. Greenlandic Inuit constitute approximately 90% of Greenland's population[53] with: constitutional protections (Self-Government Act recognizes Greenlanders as a people under international law);[54] international rights frameworks (UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ILO Convention 169);[55] and cultural/economic dependence on traditional resources (sealing, whaling, fishing, hunting). Resource development affecting traditional territories requires: free, prior, and informed consent from affected communities; environmental impact assessments considering subsistence resource impacts; benefit-sharing agreements ensuring communities receive economic gains; and cultural heritage protection preserving archaeological sites and traditional use areas. Indigenous opposition can halt projects—the 2021 election defeating pro-mining government partly reflected concerns about Kvanefjeld rare earth/uranium project's environmental impacts on subsistence fishing areas.[56]

International Indigenous rights discourse empowers Greenlandic communities while constraining Danish/Greenlandic government unilateral decisions.

IV. POLICY OPTIONS

Option A: Accelerated Greenlandic Independence Through Resource Development

Actively support and accelerate Greenlandic independence preparations through: massive resource development push approving mining, oil/gas, and infrastructure projects generating revenue streams enabling financial independence from Danish subsidies; negotiated independence transition timeline (10-15 years) providing Greenland pathway to sovereignty while maintaining Danish cooperation during transition; establishment of Danish-Greenlandic Commonwealth or associated state relationship post-independence preserving defense cooperation, shared monarchy, and coordination on Arctic affairs while granting Greenland international legal sovereignty; and preemptive positioning ensuring independent Greenland maintains Western orientation through: continued NATO/U.S. security arrangements; EU association agreement (Greenland withdrew from EEC 1985 but could negotiate new relationship);[57] and Danish economic/technical assistance preventing Chinese or Russian influence. Frame independence as fulfillment of decolonization and Indigenous self-determination, positioning Denmark as progressive supporter rather than colonial power resisting change.

Assessment: Addresses inevitable long-term trajectory proactively rather than reactively. If Greenlandic independence is eventual reality (supported by 68% of Greenlanders),[58] managing transition constructively serves Danish interests better than opposing until forced acceptance. Negotiated timeline enables: orderly transition rather than crisis-driven separation; preservation of Danish security interests (Thule access, NATO coordination) through agreements; economic cooperation protecting Danish investments and companies; and international reputation as decolonization supporter. Resource development providing independence financing also benefits Denmark through: resource revenues during transition period; Danish company participation in projects; and stable prosperous neighbor versus failed state scenario. However, fundamentally abandons core Kingdom integrity interest and creates massive strategic losses. Independent Greenland would: eliminate Danish Arctic Council membership (Greenland would inherit, Denmark loses); terminate continental shelf claims (Denmark proper has no Arctic coastline, claims derive entirely from Greenland); eliminate NATO/U.S. strategic interest in Denmark (Thule access negotiable with Greenland directly); reduce Denmark to small European state with minimal geopolitical relevance; create uncertainty about security arrangements (independent Greenland might pursue neutrality, limit Western military access, or potentially align with other powers); and establish precedent potentially encouraging Faroese independence (Faroe Islands also possess self-government and independence rights). Accelerated resource development risks: environmental disasters (oil spills, mining contamination) damaging ecosystems and subsistence resources; social disruption from rapid industrialization overwhelming small Greenlandic society; and Chinese/foreign control of economy if projects require external capital/expertise Denmark cannot provide. Financial viability questionable—proposed resource revenues would need to replace DKK 3.9 billion annual subsidy plus fund expanded government functions (foreign affairs, defense, international engagement) independence requires, necessitating massive sustained extraction potentially environmentally/socially unsustainable. Independence might trigger Greenlandic political/economic crises if resource revenues disappoint, creating failed state scenario requiring Danish intervention without legal

authority. Most fundamentally, option assumes independence is inevitable and should be accelerated, but this may be premature—if managed well, Kingdom relationship could persist for generations, while premature independence could create regrets if Greenland lacks capacity for successful sovereignty.

Option B: Assertive Integration Through Enhanced Danish Control

Reverse self-government trajectory through: constitutional reform reasserting Danish sovereignty over natural resources and foreign affairs currently devolved to Greenland; increased Danish administrative presence and oversight over Greenlandic governance; unilateral Danish approval of strategic projects (mining, infrastructure) overriding Greenlandic objections when deemed Kingdom security interests; and enhanced Danish subsidies conditional on political alignment and policy compliance. Justify through: Kingdom security requirements in era of great power competition; fiduciary responsibilities protecting Greenlandic citizens from governance failures; and environmental protection requiring Danish expertise/standards Greenlandic authorities lack. Frame as benevolent paternalism ensuring Greenlandic welfare while defending Kingdom integrity against external threats (Chinese influence) and internal risks (incompetent governance, environmental disasters).

Assessment: Protects immediate Danish sovereignty and security interests through direct control. Enhanced oversight could: prevent problematic Chinese investments threatening security; ensure environmental standards protecting ecosystems; improve governance addressing Greenlandic social challenges; and clarify Kingdom authority in international affairs. However, politically impossible, morally indefensible, legally questionable, and strategically counterproductive. Greenlandic reaction would be: universal political opposition across party spectrum; mass protests and civil disobedience; international advocacy portraying Denmark as colonial oppressor; and accelerated independence movement making separation inevitable and hostile rather than negotiated and cooperative. International consequences include: Indigenous rights violations criticism from UN mechanisms, human rights organizations, and Indigenous solidarity movements globally; reputation damage destroying Denmark's progressive Nordic brand; EU tensions (violating self-determination principles); and potential International Court of Justice litigation. Constitutional obstacles exist—Self-Government Act recognizes Greenlandic people's rights and provides independence pathway; unilateral Danish reversal would violate these provisions and likely face legal challenges. U.S./NATO reactions ambiguous—while enhanced Danish control might facilitate security cooperation on Thule, alienating Greenlandic population could destabilize situation creating base access uncertainties. Most fundamentally, colonialism is historically discredited and morally wrong—reasserting Danish control over Indigenous territory and peoples in 21st century contradicts universal self-determination principles and Denmark's own values. Option would destroy Kingdom relationship through coercion making eventual hostile separation inevitable, vastly worse outcome than negotiated partnership or managed independence.

Option C: Cooperative Sovereignty Through Balanced Partnership

Maintain and deepen Kingdom unity through genuine partnership balancing Danish security interests with Greenlandic self-determination aspirations: substantially increase Danish financial support (enhanced block grants, infrastructure co-financing, development fund) demonstrating Kingdom membership material benefits while enabling economic development without over-reliance on potentially problematic Chinese investment; establish formal

consultation mechanisms ensuring Greenlandic meaningful voice in foreign affairs and security decisions affecting Greenland (institutionalized Greenland representation in Arctic diplomacy, security policy coordination, treaty negotiations); pursue selective resource development prioritizing environmentally sustainable projects with Indigenous community support generating revenue while respecting sustainability (rare earth elements not requiring uranium extraction, renewable energy, sustainable fisheries expansion); cooperative continental shelf strategy coordinating Denmark-Greenland positions in CLCS process and boundary negotiations with Russia/Canada ensuring Greenlandic interests represented; balanced great power management allowing limited productive Chinese engagement (trade, non-strategic investments) while preventing strategic dependencies through: infrastructure financing from Denmark/EU/Nordic sources; security cooperation maintaining U.S. partnership through continued Thule access; and diplomatic coordination preventing external powers exploiting Danish-Greenlandic tensions; and environmental leadership implementing ambitious climate policies and Arctic stewardship demonstrating responsible governance benefiting both Denmark's international reputation and Greenland's environmental/cultural preservation.

Assessment: Balances competing imperatives through partnership rather than domination or separation. Enhanced financial support addresses Greenlandic economic grievances while keeping independence economically distant (continued subsidy dependence). Meaningful consultation fulfills self-determination aspirations short of independence, giving Greenlanders agency over their future while preserving Kingdom framework. Selective sustainable development provides: economic opportunities and employment; revenue streams gradually reducing subsidy dependence; environmental protection maintaining ecosystems and traditional livelihoods; and Indigenous community trust through respectful engagement. Continental shelf cooperation ensures both parties benefit from extended shelf approval. Balanced great power management prevents Chinese strategic dependencies while enabling productive engagement, maintains vital U.S. security partnership, and avoids zero-sum forcing Greenland to choose between Denmark and external powers. Environmental leadership serves multiple interests simultaneously. However, faces significant implementation challenges. Enhanced subsidies require: sustained Danish fiscal commitment during budget constraint periods; political justification to Danish voters questioning Greenland expenditure; and no guarantee subsidies prevent eventual independence if Greenlanders choose separation regardless. Consultation mechanisms require: genuine Danish willingness to accept Greenlandic input even when diverging from Copenhagen preferences; complex institutional arrangements managing shared foreign/security policy; and acceptance that Greenlandic positions may constrain Danish Arctic policies. Resource development faces economic uncertainties—projects must prove commercially viable despite harsh conditions and commodity volatility, while sustainable emphasis may limit revenue potential. Continental shelf negotiations require compromises with Russia/Canada potentially settling for less favorable boundaries than maximum claims. Great power balancing extremely difficult—Chinese capital attractive but strategically dangerous; U.S. demands may conflict with Greenlandic preferences; and maintaining balance requires sophisticated diplomacy and resources. Success depends on factors partly beyond Danish control: Greenlandic political stability and governance capacity; global commodity prices affecting development economics; great power restraint respecting Danish-Greenlandic partnership; and climate change proceeding at manageable pace.

Option D: Multilateral Arctic Governance Integration

Pursue comprehensive multilateral framework positioning Denmark-Greenland within broader Arctic cooperative institutions: expand Arctic Council authority transforming from consensus-based soft law forum to binding treaty organization with enforcement mechanisms and dispute resolution; negotiate Arctic development compact establishing multilateral rules for resource extraction, environmental protection, Indigenous rights, and revenue sharing applicable to all Arctic states; create Arctic security framework bringing security issues (currently excluded from Arctic Council) into multilateral discussion including confidence-building measures, arms control, and crisis management; propose Greenlandic permanent seat in Arctic Council and other forums recognizing Greenland's distinct status within Kingdom (comparable to Faroe Islands' arrangements in some fisheries organizations); and subordinate bilateral Danish-Greenlandic tensions to multilateral governance frameworks where both participate as partners in broader Arctic community.

Assessment: Addresses systemic governance challenges through institutional solutions rather than bilateral negotiations or unilateral assertions. Strengthened multilateral frameworks could: establish common standards reducing competitive races to bottom; provide dispute resolution mechanisms managing continental shelf overlaps; create Indigenous participation models empowering Greenlandic voices; and reduce bilateral tensions by embedding issues in multilateral contexts. Greenlandic distinct international presence fulfills autonomy aspirations within Kingdom structure while providing international recognition. Environmental and development frameworks could establish norms protecting Greenlandic interests against exploitative practices. However, fundamentally unrealistic given other Arctic states' positions and incentives. Russia and United States both oppose: expanding Arctic Council to security issues (preferring bilateral/alliance forums); binding obligations constraining sovereignty; and strong dispute resolution potentially requiring policy changes. Canada, Norway, and others protective of sovereignty resist transferring authorities to multilateral institutions. Existing Arctic Council consensus requirement means any member can block proposals, making institutional transformation requiring unanimous support virtually impossible. Arctic development compact faces resistance from: resource-dependent states (Russia, Norway, Canada) protecting extraction rights; industry opposing new regulations; and sovereignty-sensitive governments resisting external governance. Security framework contradicts NATO members' (U.S., Canada, Norway, Denmark itself) preference for alliance structures and Russian insistence on bilateral security arrangements. Greenlandic separate international status creates constitutional complications—Greenland formally represented by Denmark in foreign affairs; separate Greenlandic participation outside Danish control contradicts constitutional framework and potentially undermines Danish positions. Most fundamentally, multilateral approach underestimates Arctic states' commitment to sovereignty and bilateral relationships—all Arctic states, including Denmark, prioritize national interests and bilateral partnerships over multilateral constraints when conflicts arise. Framework would require unprecedented sovereignty transfers and trust no Arctic state currently demonstrates willingness to provide.

V. RISK ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION

Recommended Strategy: Option C – Cooperative Sovereignty Through Balanced Partnership

This approach optimally balances Denmark's competing interests given constitutional constraints, Greenlandic self-determination imperatives, geopolitical pressures, and economic realities. The strategy acknowledges that neither Danish domination (Option B) nor accelerated independence (Option A) serves long-term interests, while multilateral governance (Option D) proves unrealistic given other Arctic states' positions.

Implementation Framework:

Enhanced Partnership Component:

Substantially increase Danish financial commitments to Greenland through: block grant increase of 15-20% above current DKK 3.9 billion annually, demonstrating Kingdom commitment to Greenlandic development and welfare while addressing infrastructure and social service deficits; dedicated infrastructure development fund (DKK 5-7 billion over 10 years) co-financing: airport improvements enabling direct intercontinental flights reducing Copenhagen connection dependency; port expansions supporting fishing and potential mineral exports; telecommunications including undersea fiber optic cable and 5G deployment; and housing construction addressing critical shortages. Financing should emphasize Nordic/EU sources rather than Chinese, maintaining Western orientation while avoiding strategic dependencies.

Establish institutionalized consultation mechanisms ensuring Greenlandic meaningful participation in Kingdom foreign and security policy affecting Arctic affairs: Permanent Greenland representation on Danish delegations to Arctic Council, UN Law of Sea proceedings, and bilateral negotiations with Arctic states; Joint Committee on Arctic Security (Danish and Greenlandic officials) providing formal venue for coordinating positions on: Thule Air Base operations and potential expansions; NATO Arctic activities and exercises; foreign military vessel access to Greenlandic waters; and external security cooperation proposals (U.S., EU, Nordic partners). Greenlandic input should be advisory rather than veto-generating (preserving Danish constitutional foreign affairs authority) but genuinely influential through: transparent consultation processes; documented consideration of Greenlandic positions; and explanations when Danish decisions diverge from Greenlandic preferences; Annual Kingdom Summit between Danish Prime Minister, Greenlandic Premier, and Faroese Premier establishing high-level coordination and demonstrating partnership rather than subordination.

Selective Sustainable Development Component:

Prioritize resource development projects meeting strict criteria: environmental sustainability through comprehensive impact assessments, highest international environmental standards, and ecosystem protection measures; Indigenous community support through free, prior, and informed consent processes exceeding minimal legal requirements; commercial viability demonstrated through independent economic analysis and private sector interest; and strategic appropriateness considering geopolitical implications, ownership structures, and potential dependencies. Approved project categories should include:

Rare earth elements extraction at sites where uranium separation feasible (Greenland's 2021 ban on new uranium licenses)[59] effectively excludes Kvanefjeld but potentially allows other deposits meeting environmental standards. Given Chinese dominance of rare earth markets (controlling 80%+ of global production),[60] Greenlandic production could:

diversify Western supply chains; generate substantial export revenue; and provide strategic leverage. However, extraction requires: technological solutions separating rare earths from radioactive elements; waste management preventing environmental contamination; and Western market access/financing preventing Chinese control of Greenlandic production.

Sustainable fisheries expansion through: quota increases based on scientific stock assessments demonstrating sustainability; value-added processing development (establishing Greenlandic processing facilities rather than exporting raw catches); aquaculture pilot projects complementing wild fisheries; and ecosystem-based management protecting critical habitats while enabling responsible harvest. Fisheries provide: ongoing revenue independent of mining/oil volatility; employment in coastal communities with limited alternatives; alignment with traditional livelihoods; and lower environmental risk than extractive industries.

Renewable energy development leveraging Greenland's hydroelectric potential: expanded capacity at existing sites (Buksefjorden, Qorlortorsuaq); small-scale installations serving remote communities; and potential green hydrogen production using renewable electricity for export markets. Energy development serves: domestic needs reducing diesel generator dependence; export revenue from electricity or hydrogen; climate leadership demonstrating low-carbon development; and industrial competitiveness (aluminum smelting requires cheap abundant electricity, though previous Alcoa proposal failed other viability tests).

Tourism infrastructure supporting sustainable growth: airport improvements enabling direct flights; cruise ship regulations balancing economic benefits with environmental protection; wilderness lodge development; and cultural tourism showcasing Greenlandic heritage. Tourism provides: diversified revenue; distributed employment across regions; cultural exchange; but requires careful management preventing over-tourism degrading environments and cultures.

Continental Shelf Strategy Component:

Continue CLCS submission process providing additional scientific data as requested. Danish/Greenlandic geological surveys require: updated bathymetric mapping; seismic profiling demonstrating ridge crustal structure; sediment core analysis; and gravitational/magnetic studies. Despite budget constraints, continental shelf research should receive priority funding given potential multi-billion resource values at stake.

Initiate proactive trilateral negotiations with Russia and Canada regarding overlapping Lomonosov Ridge claims rather than awaiting CLCS determinations. Negotiation approach should explore: median line solutions dividing overlapping claim areas equally or proportionate to coastal lengths; joint development zones for hydrocarbon/mineral deposits straddling boundaries, establishing revenue sharing pending final delimitation; and scientific cooperation sharing geological data and coordinating research. Early negotiation demonstrates: cooperative approach to maritime boundary disputes; commitment to international law and peaceful settlement; and pragmatic recognition that CLCS likely approves overlapping claims requiring delimitation anyway, making direct negotiations inevitable. Proactive engagement potentially achieves more favorable outcomes than reactive responses to CLCS decisions or unilateral competitor actions.

Balanced Great Power Management Component:

Maintain robust U.S. security partnership while managing Greenlandic sensitivities: Continue Thule Air Base operations under existing agreements,[61] emphasizing missile warning and space surveillance functions clearly defensive rather than offensive. Support limited facility modernization (radar upgrades, infrastructure improvements) where operationally necessary but avoid dramatic expansions generating Greenlandic political opposition; Greenlandic community engagement addressing historical grievances (1953 Inughuit relocation)[62] through: formal apology and recognition of injustice; compensation for affected families and communities; environmental remediation of contaminated sites; and ongoing consultation ensuring base operations minimize local impacts. Historical justice supports contemporary partnership legitimacy; Enhanced U.S.-Denmark-Greenland consultations on security matters establishing trilateral rather than bilateral framework: Greenlandic officials participate in Thule oversight discussions; U.S. provides transparency on operations and planned changes; Denmark facilitates cooperation while mediating potential tensions. Framework demonstrates respect for Greenlandic interests while maintaining U.S. alliance commitments.

Manage Chinese engagement through selective cooperation and strategic restrictions: Welcome productive Chinese engagement in: trade relationships (Greenlandic seafood exports to Chinese markets); scientific cooperation (climate research, Arctic studies); tourism and cultural exchanges; and commercial investments meeting transparency, environmental, and security standards. Productive engagement demonstrates Greenland's international engagement and reduces perception of Western isolation; Prevent strategic dependencies through: security screening of Chinese investments in critical infrastructure (telecommunications, airports, ports); ownership restrictions preventing Chinese majority control of strategic assets; financing alternatives from Denmark/EU/Nordic sources enabling Greenland to decline problematic Chinese offers without foregoing development; and diplomatic coordination ensuring Denmark, U.S., and Greenlandic authorities share information on Chinese activities and coordinate responses. The 2018 airport situation—where coordinated Danish-U.S. intervention and alternative Danish financing prevented Chinese construction[63]—provides successful model for managing Chinese influence while respecting Greenlandic development needs.

Environmental Leadership Component:

Implement ambitious Arctic environmental policies demonstrating responsible stewardship: Marine protected areas designation in Greenlandic waters (target 30% by 2030)[64] balancing conservation with sustainable fisheries and development; Climate change adaptation investments addressing: infrastructure vulnerabilities from permafrost thawing; coastal community protection/relocation planning; ecosystem monitoring and adaptive management; and traditional livelihood support as environmental conditions change; Shipping regulations for vessels transiting Greenlandic waters including: environmental standards (hull construction, pollution prevention, ballast water management); mandatory ship reporting and routing through Traffic Separation Schemes; icebreaker escort requirements in heavy ice conditions; and accident prevention/response capabilities (tugs, spill response equipment); Oil spill prevention and response capacity development preparing for potential offshore petroleum activities or shipping accidents through: dispersant stockpiles; trained response teams; equipment pre-positioning; and international cooperation agreements (Nordic countries, U.S., Canada) for mutual assistance.

Risk Mitigation:

Independence Pressure Management: Enhanced partnership approach aims to demonstrate Kingdom membership benefits while respecting self-determination, but cannot guarantee preventing eventual independence if Greenlanders choose separation. Mitigation requires: continuous monitoring of Greenlandic public opinion and political sentiment; responsive adjustments to policies addressing emerging concerns; genuine implementation of partnership commitments (avoiding empty rhetoric); acceptance that graceful managed transition preferable to hostile separation if independence becomes inevitable; and contingency planning for potential independence scenarios ensuring: defense cooperation preservation (Thule access through treaties with independent Greenland); economic relationships maintenance (free trade, labor mobility, currency arrangements); and Western orientation continuation (EU association, NATO partnership, Nordic cooperation).

Fiscal Sustainability: Enhanced subsidy commitments and infrastructure co-financing require sustained Danish expenditure during fiscal constraint periods. Mitigation requires: long-term budgetary allocation with multi-year commitments providing certainty; political consensus building across Danish parties supporting Greenland investment as strategic priority; efficiency measures ensuring funds effectively used (oversight, accountability, results monitoring); and communication to Danish public explaining: Kingdom benefits to Denmark (Arctic status, security relevance, resource potential); moral obligations (historical colonial relationship, ongoing responsibilities); and enlightened self-interest (stable prosperous Greenland preferable to failed state or Chinese client).

Geopolitical Competition: Great power competition over Greenlandic access and influence will intensify as Arctic accessibility increases. Mitigation requires: continuous assessment of external influence attempts and vulnerabilities; coordination among Denmark, U.S., Greenland, and Nordic partners; alternative financing ensuring Greenland need not accept problematic external deals; and defensive investments (icebreakers, surveillance, presence) demonstrating Kingdom capability to defend sovereignty without requiring external military presence alienating Greenlanders.

Environmental Challenges: Climate change creates both opportunities and threats requiring: adaptation investments protecting infrastructure and communities; ecosystem monitoring enabling responsive management; traditional livelihood support as environmental conditions change; and participation in international climate governance demonstrating leadership and protecting Arctic interests.

This framework positions Denmark-Greenland to: preserve Kingdom unity through genuine partnership rather than coercion; advance shared interests in continental shelf claims through cooperative CLCS engagement and proactive boundary negotiations; manage great power competition preventing Chinese strategic dependencies while maintaining U.S. security partnership; pursue sustainable development generating economic opportunities while protecting environmental and Indigenous values; and establish international leadership on Arctic governance demonstrating responsible stewardship contrasting with more militaristic or exploitative approaches. Success requires sustained commitment, adequate resources, sophisticated diplomacy balancing competing pressures, and most critically, Greenlandic partnership and consent—without which no Danish Arctic policy can succeed.[65]

FOOTNOTES

[1] Constitutional Act of Denmark, § 1 (June 5, 1953, as amended) (establishing Kingdom of Denmark comprising Denmark, Greenland, and Faroe Islands).

[2] Statistics Greenland, *Greenland in Figures 2023* 6-8 (2023).

[3] Legal Status of Eastern Greenland (Den. v. Nor.), 1933 P.C.I.J. (ser. A/B) No. 53 (Apr. 5); Treaty of Kiel, Den.-Swed., art. IV, Jan. 14, 1814 (ceding Norway and Norwegian Atlantic territories to Sweden, Denmark retaining Greenland, Faroe Islands, Iceland).

[4] United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, opened for signature Dec. 10, 1982, 1833 U.N.T.S. 397 (entered into force Nov. 16, 1994) [hereinafter UNCLOS]; Danish ratification Nov. 16, 2004.

[5] Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, *Partial Submission by the Kingdom of Denmark Together with the Government of Greenland*, Executive Summary (Nov. 15, 2014).

[6] Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, *Partial Revised Submission of the Russian Federation* (Aug. 3, 2015); *Partial Submission by Canada* (May 23, 2019).

[7] IPCC, *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, ch. 3 at 203-320 (2019) (Arctic warming twice global average).

[8] IMBIE Team, *Mass Balance of the Greenland Ice Sheet from 1992 to 2018*, 579 NATURE 233 (2020).

[9] U.S. Geological Survey, *Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal*, Fact Sheet 2008-3049 (2008).

[10] Government of Greenland, *Greenland Mineral Resources*, in MINERAL RESOURCES IN GREENLAND (2021); Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland, *Mineral Resource Potential of Greenland* (2019).

[11] Katarzyna Zysk, *Russia's Arctic Strategy: Ambitions and Constraints*, 36 JOINT FORCE Q. 103 (2010); Russian Ministry of Defence, *Arctic Military Infrastructure Development* (2015-2023).

[12] Ulrik Pram Gad & Naja Dyrendom Graugaard, *National Identity Politics and Postcolonial Sovereignty Games: Greenland, Denmark, and the European Union* 48-67 (2019); Marc Lanteigne, *Have You Entered the Storehouses of the Snow? China as a Norm Entrepreneur in the Arctic*, 35 POLAR RECORD 117 (2017).

[13] State Council Information Office, People's Republic of China, *China's Arctic Policy* (Jan. 2018); Mia Bennett, *How China Sees the Arctic: Reading Between Extraregional and Intraregional Narratives*, 13 GEOPOLITICS 645 (2015).

[14] U.S. Department of Defense, *Thule Air Base Operations* (2023); Royal Danish Air Force, *Thule Air Base History* (2020).

[15] Michael Crowley & Maggie Haberman, *Trump's Interest in Buying Greenland Seemed Like a Joke. Then It Got Ugly*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 21, 2019); Naalakkersuisut (Government of Greenland), *Statement on U.S. Purchase Proposal* (Aug. 16, 2019).

[16] Act on Greenland Self-Government, Act No. 473 (June 12, 2009) [hereinafter Self-Government Act].

[17] *Id.* § 21 (recognizing Greenlandic people's right to independence).

[18] Statistics Greenland, *supra* note 2, at 34; Government of Denmark, Ministry of Finance, *Finance Act 2024* (block grant allocation).

[19] Statistics Greenland, *supra* note 2, at 12-14.

[20] UN General Assembly, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, UN Doc. A/RES/61/295 (Sept. 13, 2007); Denmark endorsed with interpretive statement 2009.

[21] Janne Flora, *Seals, Identity, and Taste: A Change in Perspectives*, in CULTIVATING ARCTIC LANDSCAPES 227-245 (2018).

[22] Kirsten Thisted, *Discourses of Indigeneity: Branding Greenland in the Age of Self-Government and Climate Change*, in ARCTIC DISCOURSES pp. xvii-xliii (2015).

[23] Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, *The Ukraine Crisis Moves North: Is Arctic Conflict Spilling Over?*, 53 POLAR RECORD 1 (2017) (analyzing Denmark's Arctic strategic significance).

[24] Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, *supra* note 5.

[25] *Id.*; Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, *supra* note 6 (Russian and Canadian overlapping submissions).

[26] Government of Greenland, *Greenland in Figures 2023*, *supra* note 2, at 45-67 (social indicators including substance abuse, suicide rates, unemployment).

[27] *Id.* at 34.

[28] Statistics Denmark, *Greenland-Born Residents in Denmark* (2022).

[29] Agreement Relating to the Defense of Greenland, Den.-U.S., art. III, Apr. 27, 1951, 2 U.S.T. 1485.

[30] Arctic Council, *Ottawa Declaration* (Sept. 19, 1996); Arctic Council, *Senior Arctic Officials' Report to Ministers* (May 2021).

[31] Inuit Circumpolar Council, *About ICC*, <https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com> (ICC-Greenland hosts international secretariat).

[32] Government of Denmark, *Denmark's Climate Action Plan* (2020) (70% emissions reduction by 2030 target).

[33] Statistics Greenland, *supra* note 2, at 56-59.

[34] Self-Government Act, *supra* note 16, §§ 2-8.

[35] Naalakkersuisut, *Greenland's International Relations* (2023); Ulrik Pram Gad, *Post-Colonial Identity in Greenland? When the Empire Dichotomizes Back*, 34 J. LANGUAGE & POL. 271 (2009).

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[37] Government of Greenland, *Political Parties*, <https://naalakkersuisut.gl>; Marc Jacobsen & Ulrik Pram Gad, *Setting the Scene: Introducing the Postcolonial Arctic*, in THE POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE ARCTIC 1-12 (2016).

[38] Statistics Greenland, *supra* note 2, at 34.

[39] Self-Government Act, *supra* note 16, § 8 (revenue-sharing provisions).

[40] Government of Greenland, *Mineral License Overview* (2023); Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen, *Halted Projects: The Aluminium Smelter*, in LARGE-SCALE MINING IN GREENLAND 45-67 (2016).

[41] Naalakkersuisut, *Suspension of Oil and Gas Exploration Licensing* (July 15, 2021); *Ban on Uranium Mining* (Nov. 2021).

[42] Gad & Graugaard, *supra* note 12, at 48-67; Kristian Søby Kristensen & Jon Rahbek-Clemmensen, *Greenland and the New Arctic: Political and Security Implications of a Changing Geostrategic Landscape*, DIIS REPORT 2017:04 (2017).

[43] Government of Greenland, *Infrastructure Investment Needs Assessment* (2020).

[44] State Council Information Office, *supra* note 13; Bennett, *supra* note 13; Lanteigne, *supra* note 12.

[45] Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen, *supra* note 42, at 34-45; Danish Ministry of Finance, *Greenland Airport Financing Agreement* (2018).

[46] Aviaja Egede Lynge, *The Right to Return: Inughuit and Uummannaq Families Relocated from Thule Air Base in 1953*, DIIS WORKING PAPER 2019:4 (2019).

[47] Naalakkersuisut, *Thule Review Committee Report* (2019).

[48] Crowley & Haberman, *supra* note 15; Naalakkersuisut, *supra* note 15.

[49] NATO, *Secretary General's Annual Report 2022* 34-38 (2023) (Arctic security initiatives).

[50] Folketing (Danish Parliament), Decision on Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, No. 148 (May 14, 1985) (Greenland nuclear-free zone policy).

[51] IMBIE Team, *supra* note 8.

[52] AMAP, *Arctic Climate Change Update 2021*, Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (2021).

[53] Statistics Greenland, *supra* note 2, at 12-14.

[54] Self-Government Act, *supra* note 16, § 1 (recognizing Greenlanders as a people under international law).

[55] UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, *supra* note 20; ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, adopted June 27, 1989 (Denmark has not ratified but acknowledges principles).

[56] Naalakkersuisut, *Election Results 2021* (Apr. 6, 2021) (Inuit Ataatigiit victory partly on Kvanefjeld opposition platform).

[57] Treaty on Greenland, Den.-EEC, Feb. 13, 1985 (establishing Greenland's withdrawal from EEC while maintaining OCT association).

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[59] Naalakkersuisut, *supra* note 41.

[60] U.S. Geological Survey, *Rare Earth Elements*, Mineral Commodity Summaries 132-133 (2024).

[61] Agreement Relating to the Defense of Greenland, *supra* note 29.

[62] Lynge, *supra* note 46.

[63] Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen, *supra* note 42, at 34-45; Danish Ministry of Finance, *supra* note 45.

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[65] This framework draws on MARC JACOBSEN & ULRIK PRAM GAD (EDS.), *THE POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE ARCTIC* (2016); KRISTIAN SØBY KRISTENSEN & JON RAHBK-CLEMMENSEN, *GREENLAND AND THE NEW ARCTIC* (DIIS REPORT 2017:04); MICHAEL BYERS, *INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE ARCTIC* (2013).