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Parliamentary Elections in Greenland (March 11, 2025)

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1. Introduction

On the 11th of March 2025, amidst what can only be described as a moment of significant geopolitical pressure, Greenlanders were called to the polls for the most recent regional parliamentary elections. Aimed at electing 31 members of the regional parliament – the *Inatsisartut* – the six regional parties presented themselves in an election where the main topics were the region’s independence from the Kingdom of Denmark, the threat of annexation by the United States of America under Donald Trump’s leadership, but also the continued concern with the exploitation of the natural resources of the world’s largest island. In this election, the main parties were the *Demokraatit* (Democratic Party), *Naleraq* (Orientation Point Party), *Inuit Ataqatigiit* (Party of the Inuit People), *Siumut* (Forward Party), *Atassut* (Solidarity Party) e *Qulleq* (Oil lamp party).

Table 1: Parties and their position in the political spectrum.

Party	Position in the political spectrum
Demokraatit	Centre-right social-liberal party.
Naleraq	Centre-right nationalist party.
Inuit Ataqatigiit	Left wing eco-socialist, social-democrat party.
Siumut	Centre-left social-democrat party.
Atassut	Liberal-conservative party.
Qulleq	Pro-America, national independentist party.

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Let us consider the central issues of the campaign. As noted above, on the domestic front the main electoral themes were independence *versus* maintenance of the status quo in relation to union with the Kingdom of Denmark, exploitation of natural resources (minerals and hydrocarbons), the economic situation (fishing, subsidies, and diversification), and external relations (especially with Denmark and the United States of America). One can observe, in the course of the debate, the prominence of the independence issue, with all major parties supporting the long-term independence of the territory, diverging however on the timeline and conditions for its implementation. While the nationalist parties *Naleraq* and the recently founded *Qulleq* defended an “abrupt independence”, with one party leader even suggesting that the American threats of annexation could serve as a negotiating opportunity for the region’s security, the centrist parties – *Demokraatit*, *Siumut* and the Innuits – considered that independence would depend on sustainable economic progress, which would determine, as a first step, whether the region can disconnect economically (in addition to the natural political separation) from Denmark. However, the issue of independence was not the only topic of relevance in these elections, since Greenland displays a high degree of dependence on the fishing industry, with the remaining regional income originating from support subsidies paid by Denmark. Greenland is a region rich in several mineral (precious stones, precious metals, rare earths) and natural (oil and gas) resources, and there is therefore a long-standing political desire to achieve self-sufficiency through the exploitation of these resources. In that respect, each party held its own vision of how best to take advantage of the opportunities existing in the region. While *Demokraatit* has a mining development plan based on support for private initiative – with some (at least partial) agreement from *Naleraq* and *Qulleq* – the Innuits oppose the extraction of some marine-based mineral and natural resources, advocating instead the creation of a public industry specifically dedicated to that purpose. Lastly, as we will see, the issue of external relations was hotly debated, given that although Greenland depends on Denmark for matters relating to diplomacy, defence, and economic policy, any progressive move towards independence would require the region to take responsibility for these areas. It bears repeating that this concern with self-sufficiency is very relevant for the region: Greenland’s capacity (even if in the future) to exploit its vast mineral and natural resources would allow it not only to place itself in a stronger economic position, but also to position itself diplomatically in relation to its neighbours in the North Atlantic region.

2. Legal and Constitutional Framework of Greenland

Before addressing the electoral system currently in force in Greenland, as well as the constitutionally recognised rights, it is important to contextualise the progressive path from colonial status to autonomy within the Kingdom of Denmark.

Until 1953, Greenland was considered a Danish colony and therefore devoid of rights and guarantees. However, with the constitutional revision carried out in that year – which coincides with the Constitution currently in force – it was integrated as a constituent part of the Kingdom of Denmark, paving the way for the recognition of previously non-existent rights. In 1979, with the entry into force of the *Home Rule Act*⁴, Greenland came to have its own parliament (*Landsting*) with legislative competence over specific matters – namely, social security, health, and transport – and a local government with executive powers led by the *Landsstyre*.

Finally, with the entry into force of the *Self-Government Act* in 2009⁵, Greenland's autonomy reached a new dimension, with the local government (*Naalakkersuisut*) being considered equal to the Danish government⁶. Beyond the recognition of institutional parity, the reform also extended, under its first article, Greenland's legislative competences, introduced a regional judiciary, as well as, making room for the territory to enter into international agreements that concern it alone pursuant to articles 11, 12 and 14⁷. It further opened the door to independent participation in international organisations, so long as this remains consistent with Greenland's constitutional position. More importantly, the *Self-Government Act* expressly states under article 21, that the decision regarding potential independence lies with the Greenlandic people.

A) Electoral Framework of Greenland

Despite the high degree of current autonomy, Greenland remains part of the Kingdom of Denmark and is therefore subject to the Danish Constitution. However, such subjection does not imply a direct limitation on the exercise of Greenland's rights of representation in the Danish Parliament (*Folketing*). In fact, article 28 of the Danish Constitution establishes the election of two Members of Parliament from the region to the *Folketing* – similarly to the Faroe Islands. It should also be noted that, pursuant to article 32 no. 5, the beginning and end of the respective mandates of Greenlandic MPs in the *Folketing* may not coincide with those of the other 175 MPs elected in mainland Denmark.

⁴ Act No. 577 of 29 November 1978, which was subsequently submitted to a referendum, was approved with approximately 70% of the votes and entered into force on 1 May 1979.

⁵ Act No. 473 of 12 June 2009, which was preceded by a referendum held on 25 November 2008 and approved by over 75% of voters, was subsequently ratified by the Danish Parliament and entered into force on 21 June 2009.

⁶ The preamble to the legislative act places the Greenlandic Parliament on an equal footing with the Danish Parliament, enshrining the right to self-determination of the people of the region.

⁷ Although it remains an integral part of the Kingdom of Denmark, Greenland is not a member of the European Union, having voted to leave the then European Economic Community in a referendum held on 23 February 1982

It is also worth highlighting that the election of the two Greenlandic MPs to the *Folketing* is not limited to mere symbolic representation of the region but constitutes full and active participation in parliamentary activities. These MPs enjoy the same rights and prerogatives as other members of the Danish Parliament: they may present legislative proposals, join parliamentary committees – notably, the Greenland Committee – and serve as an institutional link between the Danish Parliament and Greenland's sovereign bodies.

The same applies with regard to active suffrage in municipal elections in Greenland, since the Constitution under article 86 provides that, in Denmark, this electoral capacity is to be assessed according to the law applicable at the time of the vote, while clarifying that this matter falls within the legislative competence of the Greenlandic authorities.

B) Greenland's Electoral System

Although an integral part of the Kingdom of Denmark, Greenland has an Electoral Law⁸ establishing a representative, unicameral parliamentary system of government, in which the head of government is the Prime Minister, elected by an absolute majority of the MPs elected to the *Inatsisartut*. The Danish monarch remains the head of state but exercises no political power – unlike in most constitutional monarchies – being entrusted solely with ceremonial and representative functions. Characteristics of the electoral system:

- I) Election for a mandate of four years, using direct, secret, and universal suffrage limited by territorial and residential criteria.
- II) Active suffrage capability for the Parliament of Greenland is recognised for Danish citizens, 18 years old or older, living in Greenland for at least 6 months prior to the election date, and for citizens living outside Greenland under the following conditions established under article 2 of Greenland's electoral law:
 - a. Citizens who are students living outside the regions for at least 6 months.
 - b. Citizens traveling for legally prescribed medical treatment.
 - c. Those serving a mandate as a member of Danish parliament elected in Greenland.
 - d. Those who are officially representing government of Greenland abroad.
 - e. Any situations deemed equivalent to the above.
- III) Passive suffrage is recognised for all who meet the requirements for active suffrage, except in cases of disqualification due to criminal conviction.
- IV) Elections are held via proportional representation with open lists, in a single national constituency.
- V) The law allows for the presentation of electoral lists in the following cases:
 - f. Political parties that held seats in the previous Greenlandic Parliament.

⁸ Act of the Greenlandic Parliament (*Inatsisartutlov*) no. 14, 24 November 2020, having entered into force on the 1st of December 2020.

- g. Parties or voter groups that have gathered support declarations amounting to at least 1/31 of the valid votes cast in the previous election.

h. Independent candidates supported by a minimum of 40 voters.

VI) The conversion of votes into mandates is done through the *d'Hondt* method as established under article 52 of the Electoral Law.

VII) The validity of MPs' mandates is verified by a special commission appointed for this purpose.
- VIII) The *Inatsisartut* must convene within a maximum of 45 days after the elections, with the first session chaired by the oldest member until the Speaker of the Greenlandic Parliament is elected.

IX) Following the election of the Prime Minister, he or she is responsible for proposing the remaining members of the Government, who are then subject to approval by the *Inatsisartut* via a vote.

X) The proposed members of government must meet the same eligibility requirements as MPs

3. Electoral Results

Table 2: Electoral Results

	Regional Parliamentary Elections 2025		Regional Parliamentary Election 2021		Difference	
	Cast votes	Percentage of votes (%)	Cast votes	Percentage of votes (%)	Cast votes	Percentage of votes (%)
<i>Atassut</i>	2,092	7.3	1,878	6.9	+214	+0.4
<i>Demokraatit</i>	8,536	29.9	2,454	9.1	+6109	+20.9
<i>Inuit Ataqatigiit</i>	6,119	21.4	9,933	36.6	-3814	-15.3
<i>Naleraq</i>	7,009	24.5	3,252	12.0	+3757	+12.5
<i>Qulleq</i>	305	1.1	0	0.0	+305	+1.1
<i>Siumut</i>	4,210	14.7	7,986	29.5	-3776	-14.7

Source: Election Service of the Government of Greenland, available at: <https://qinersineq.gl/>

Table 3: Statistical data

	Regional Parliament Election 2025	Regional Parliament Election 2021	Difference
Cast Votes	40.369	41.126	- 757
Counted Votes	28.620	27.109	+1.511
Blank	218	296	-78
Void	104	285	-181
Total of valid votes	28.298	26.528	+1.770
Turnout	70,9%	65,9%	+5,0

Source: Election Service of the Government of Greenland, available at: <https://qinersineq.gl/>

The elections of 11 March took all Greenlandic political parties by surprise⁹. The victory of *Demokraatit*¹⁰, with nearly 30% of the vote, removed from power the coalition between Siumut and the Inuit People's Party (*Inuit Ataqatigiit*). These two parties were not even able to reach second place, which was instead taken by Naleraq, with 24.5% of the votes.

The rise of the Democrats from 9% to nearly 30% is quite a curious episode, but one that becomes readily understandable when examining their electoral campaign. In addition to being a liberal party supportive of Greenlandic autonomy, it focused its campaign on education, access to healthcare, and employment.

This last issue is particularly relevant due to the fact that young Greenlanders are often forced to emigrate or study in Denmark or other European countries due to the scarcity of opportunities in their homeland. To prevent this, Greenlandic parliaments have successively submitted costly proposals and budgets aimed at retaining young people within Greenland. Even so, it was thanks to its position on Greenlandic independence and its firm stance towards Donald Trump that the party attracted voters from certain left-wing parties (including *Naleraq*) and brought them closer to its own platform.

On the other hand, the decline of the *Naleraq* Party is linked to its openness to strengthening ties with the United States through a proposed free trade agreement¹¹. Naturally, after the controversial statements made by the US president – suggesting he would acquire the island one way or another, not excluding military intervention – any mention of that country by a party was enough to generate a negative connotation, in a clear act of rejection by voters.

Thus, the moderation regarding autonomy and independence, the ownership of key campaign issues, and the intransigent response to the US President's remarks formed the perfect equation for the Democratic Party to win the Greenlandic elections unexpectedly¹².

With a new government led by the Democratic Party, Greenlandic politics will undergo a shift in the executive's political priorities. This change will bring an increased focus on issues such as education, the recruitment of more healthcare professionals, the installation of modern medical equipment, and support policies for fishermen and coastal communities¹³. In turn, the matter of sovereignty transfer from Co-

penhagen to Greenland will be placed on the back burner.

Even so, there is broad recognition that Greenland, for essentially economic reasons, must strengthen its local economy and diversify its sources of income and self-generated revenue before it can fully sever ties with Denmark.

Beyond these matters, the Democratic government will bring other changes that will primarily impact foreign policy, particularly with China and the United States of America. However, even though the current regional government may desire change, as long as independence has not been achieved, the determination of foreign policy remains a prerogative of Denmark.

4. Foreign policy analysis

As mentioned earlier, the President of the United States declared his intention to annex Greenland, citing benefits deemed essential to US national security. In fact, Greenland has long held strategic significance in American geopolitical thinking. Under the Monroe Doctrine, the region was considered an area of interest primarily for its gold, ruby, and cryolite reserves. During the Cold War, the United States acquired a military base in Greenland, Pituffik, which currently serves the purpose of early missile detection. Additionally, the island's 36.1 million tonnes of natural resources, particularly rare earth elements, have once again positioned Greenland as a key engine for US economic growth and national security. According to the latest report from the American Geological Survey, Greenland's mineable rare earth reserves are estimated at approximately 1.5 million tonnes¹⁴.

With the new prime minister in office, it is expected that relations between Greenland and the United States will cool significantly, especially following the US President's controversial remarks. In this context, Greenland's current Prime Minister declared that the American head of government constitutes a threat to the region's political independence and that its inhabitants had to defend themselves. Indeed, Múte Egede, the Prime Minister, is not alone in this position: a poll published in January 2025 showed that only 6% of those surveyed were in favour of becoming a US state. These results are unsurprising: Trump's declarations, coupled with a growing sense of fear and stigma surrounding potential annexation, likely led many Greenlanders to choose the safest option, by voting for the candidate who most vigorously opposed the notion of US absorption and most firmly upheld Greenlandic independence.

Another factor potentially motivating Donald Trump's posture toward Greenland is the US strategic desire to gain access to Greenlandic minerals, thus achieving a degree of autonomy from China, which currently maintains a monopoly over key technological and defence-sector resources.

Given the increased acquisition of icebreaker vessels, it is not difficult to deduce that China is actively pursuing the development of new trade routes, particularly via Greenland¹⁵ and the Arctic. In contrast

⁹ Offshore Engineer. (2025) *Who won Greenland's parliamentary election?* OE Digital. Available (Online) at: <https://energynews.oedigital.com/mineral-resources/2025/03/12/who-won-greenlands-parliamentary-election>.

¹⁰ CPH Star. (2025). *Demokraatit: The biggest winners in the Greenland election*. Available (Online) at: <https://www.cphstar.dk/2025/03/12/demokraatit-the-biggest-winners-in-the-greenland-election/>

¹¹ A proposal that is by no means unreasonable, given that it is in Greenland's interest — in a scenario of independence — to develop economic ties with other states. It should not be forgotten that, as is the case in regionalised unitary states, Greenland's foreign policy remains in the hands of the Danish government.

¹² Associated Press (2025). *Opposition wins most votes in Greenland election amid Trump takeover talk*. NPR. Available (Online) at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/12/g-s1-53278/greenland-election-results-trump>

¹³ As Jeppe Strandsbjerg stated for the NPR “*a lot of people (want to have) improvements in the schooling system, improvements in the health care system. Those issues are more present in the electorate than the issues that we usually focus on from the U.S.*” Neuman, S. & Marx, W. – What Greenland's elections mean for the island – and the U.S. NPR. Available (Online) at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/13/nx-s1-5325949/greenland-elections-trump-independence>

¹⁴ Ramos, G.A (2025). *Eleições na Gronelândia condicionadas por independência e por Donald Trump*. RTP Notícias. Available (Online) at: https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/eleicoes-na-gronelandia-condicionadas-por-independencia-e-por-donald-trump_n1639788

¹⁵ Dubois, K. (2018). *The Security Implications of China-Greenland Relations*. *The*

with the United States, Greenlandic public opinion regarding closer ties with China is mixed: some oppose it, while others — particularly among the Inuit ethnic population¹⁶ — are supportive.

China has successfully implemented a strategy of sharp power and *win-win*¹⁷ diplomacy, based on mutual cooperation and infrastructure development in several African and Latin American countries. Greenland appears to follow a similar path¹⁸. The construction of much-needed infrastructure in exchange for access and influence grants China a form of monopoly over emerging trade routes¹⁹. Projects such as the Polar Silk Road, which promotes investment — via Chinese companies — in mines for rare earths and minerals in Greenland²⁰ (e.g., the Kvanefjeld project), represent clear potential for gains, particularly in renewable energy and technology sectors.

However, Chinese interest in Greenland has somewhat waned²¹. After realising the lack of basic infrastructure, which could hinder future projects and the establishment of Chinese firms, the idea arose of building airports in Greenland to support long-term investment. This plan prompted reactions from both the United States and Greenland, with the latter quickly proposing alternative funding for its airport construction. Following this obstacle, private investor interest declined.

Nevertheless, the interests of private investors are not always aligned with those of the Chinese government. The desire for greater influence in Greenland is likely to grow, both from China and the United States²².

Polar Connection. Available (Online) at: <https://polarconnection.org/security-china-greenland-relations/>

¹⁶ The Inuit people inhabit Greenland, Alaska, and Canada. They have Asian ancestry and culture, and it is believed that there was a migration of this people to the Americas.

¹⁷ Volpe, M. (2020). The tortuous path of China's "win-win" strategy in Greenland. *The Arctic Institute*. Available (Online) at: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/tortuous-path-china-win-win-strategy-greenland/>

¹⁸ Chen, C. (2022). China's engagement in Greenland: mutual economic benefits and political non-interference. *Polar Research*. 41(1), 1-7. Available (Online) at: <https://doi.org/10.33265/polar.v41.7706>

¹⁹ Garcha, P. (2025). Greenland's pursuit of independence: Implications for China-Greenland relations and Arctic resource management. *The Organization for World Peace*. Available (Online) at: <https://theowp.org/reports/greenlands-pursuit-of-independence-implications-for-china-greenland-relations-and-arctic-resource-management/>

²⁰ Nielsen, L.N. & Strandsbjerg, J. (2024). "Nothing about us without us": What can we learn from Greenland's new Arctic Strategy 2024–2033? *Arctic Yearbook*. Available (Online) at: <https://arcticyearbook.com/arctic-yearbook/2024/2024-briefing-notes/538-nothing-about-us-without-us-what-can-we-learn-from-greenland-s-new-arctic-strategy-2024-2033>

²¹ Andersson, P. (2025). Greenland eyes China amid Denmark–US tensions, but Chinese investors won't rush in. *The Diplomat*. Available (Online) at: <https://thediplomat.com/2025/04/greenland-eyes-china-amid-denmark-us-tensions-but-chinese-investors-wont-rush-in/>

²² Andersson, P. (2025). China already left – So what is Trump's Greenland gambit about? *Swedish National China Centre*. Available (Online) at: <https://kinacentrum.se/en/publications/china-already-left-so-what-is-trumps-greenland-gambit-about/>

