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GREENLAND – FROM AUTONOMY TO (IN)DEPENDENCE

Matters associated with the current development of Greenland can be viewed from the perspective of internal relations in the Kingdom of Denmark. Nevertheless, the processes unfolding on the world's largest island seem to be much more profound. The island's strategic location, advancing climate change and reports of deposits of mineral resources all make Greenland a subject of interest to more than just researchers of the Arctic. The formation process of the island's statehood exemplifies how the principle of self-determination of nations can be applied. The significance of this process can hardly be exaggerated, especially given the independence movements that have recently emerged (for instance in Catalonia and Scotland).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the process of development of Greenland's autonomy, especially vis-à-vis the Act on Greenland Self-Government of 2009, which ensures that decisions on the future status of the island will be made by the people of Greenland. This study also aims to discuss the relations between Denmark and Greenland in terms of post-colonial relations between the former metropolis/colonizer and the island, outlining also the discourse on independence in Greenland. Finally, the paper analyzes the popular claim that the anticipated proceeds from mineral extraction will lay foundations for Greenland to become independent from Danish subsidies, thereby allowing the island to become a sovereign entity.

The Kingdom of Denmark is a unique example of a unitary state composed of three clearly distinct components: Denmark and Greenland and the Faroe Islands, both of which enjoy considerable autonomy. The Home Rule Acts of individual Nordic territories have been designed so as to ensure that the unity of the state is retained, while recognizing and respecting the diverse characters of its components. The main reason behind this was to give power regarding matters concerning these territories exclusively, and the resulting accountability, to their residents, in recognition of the exceptional historical, cultural, ethnic and geographical positions of these territories.

From 1814 until the mid-20th century, Greenland was a colony directly governed by the Danish government. In 1954, the island was included in the Kingdom of Denmark as a district (*amt*), thereby terminating the period of colonial dependence. In 1973, work commenced to prepare self-government for Greenland within the Kingdom of Denmark. An agreement was worked out and adopted both by the Danish parliament and the island residents, and on May 1, 1979, the Greenland Home Rule Act came into force. In late 20th century, the community of Greenland (as well as the Faroe Islands) concluded that the Home Rule Act had performed its intended function and respon-

sibilities had been transferred in line with its provisions. However, the majority of Greenlandic political forces began to perceive the framework of the Home Rule Act as excessively rigid and detrimental to the further advancement of autonomy. A new Act on Greenland Self-Government came into force in 2009 and considerably expanded the powers of Greenland's government.

Greenland is the world's largest island, with a surface area of 2,166,086 km² and 55,800 residents (as of January 2017). The population of its capital, Nuuk, is 17,600. Legislative power on the island is exercised by the local parliament (*Inatsisartut*) of 31 members, and executive power is exercised by the government (*Naalakkersuisut*). A considerable proportion of the island's budget is ensured by an annual subsidy from Denmark to the tune of nearly DKK 3.7 billion, which accounts for nearly 25% of Greenland's GDP (*Greenland in Figures*, 2017: 7).

THE WORK AND FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON SELF-GOVERNANCE

Greenland's pursuit of a redefined relationship with Denmark found expression in the Commission on Self-Governance, established in 1999. The Commission's mandate included drafting a report on the opportunities to develop the independence of Greenland within the Danish community on the basis of balance between powers and responsibilities (*Terms*, 2003). Right from the beginning, it was clearly stressed that the Commission did not have the goal of paving the way to independence, but rather of seeking solutions which would enable Greenland to expand its powers within the framework of the United Kingdom of Denmark. The Commission's Chairman, Jakob Janussen additionally stressed a frequently disregarded argument against independence of Greenland. In his opinion, a territory with such a strategic location as Greenland, with such a large surface and such a limited population, will always depend on another state.¹

Particular importance in the Commission's work was assigned to the matter of Greenland exerting greater influence on foreign and security policy, and that of reducing the dependence of the island's economy on Danish subsidies. Practically from the beginning of home rule, Greenlandic politicians have been trying to solve the paradox whereby the more Greenland wanted to become independent from the mother state (by way of taking over additional responsibilities), the more it was forced to rely on Danish experts, since it almost completely lacked its own staff (Dahl, 2003).

The Greenland Home Rule Act of 1979 was the product of a compromise, and was viewed as a political success and a model for the termination of colonial domination. Its adoption was supported by a definite majority in the Danish parliament, and of voters in a referendum in Greenland. For over twenty years, the Act was not significantly amended. Two models for the further development of relations with the mother state emerged in late 20th century. One argued that the Act had to be reviewed and adapted to the changing situation; the other argued that a completely new model of Greenlandic-Danish relations was needed. The former concept was favored on the island.

¹ Significantly, Jakob Janussen expressed his view before huge natural resources were discovered in Greenland.

The final report of the Commission was unanimously adopted without dissenting opinions and presented to the local parliament on April 11, 2003. Importantly, the Commission deemed that Greenlanders had fulfilled all the conditions established in the decolonization process for a territory to cope with the full right of self-determination, as understood in Article 1 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.

In this context, it was primarily indicated that Greenland:

- is an overseas territory of the Kingdom of Denmark (*salt water theory*²);
- has a population with its own language, separate history and sense of national identity;
- enjoys a special position within the Kingdom of Denmark (as evidenced by the following, to name a few: Greenland leaving the EEC, membership of regional organizations, symbols of independence: the flag, anthem and post office);
- has experienced a long period of colonial rule, which is confirmed by Greenland having been listed as a dependent territory as understood by the UN Charter (*Report*, 2003: 17).

The Commission also stressed the fact that, from the moment that the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark of 1953 came into force, Denmark consistently refuted the possibility of the secession of Greenland. It was emphasized that legal regulations provided for Greenlanders to be treated as a *special people* in the Kingdom of Denmark. The Commission believed that Denmark did not recognize the island's residents as being a *people* as interpreted by the UN, thereby denying their right to self-determination (*Report*, 2003: 18).

The starting point for the Commission was to propose that a new agreement be founded on partnership within the Kingdom of Denmark. Discussing the reasons necessitating the adoption of new regulations on the relationship, the Commission started with the progressive integration of Denmark into the European Union, as well as globalization. The proposal drafted by the Commission gained the working title *Partnership Treaty Concerning Greenland's Self-Governance*. The document was founded on the following:

- mutual respect resulting from the *equality* of both partners (emphasis – TB);
- Greenland being recognized as a subject of international law;
- acknowledging that Greenlanders should have the right to self-determination (*Report*, 2003: 19–20).

Profound changes were proposed in the field of the economy, which should pursue greater self-sufficiency. The Commission described the economic relations between Denmark and Greenland at the time in terms of a “dependence economy.” It was emphasized that the subsidies would have to be considerably reduced in the near future.

² The *salt water theory*, or *blue water theory*, says that the right to self-determination in the framework of decolonization can only be granted to non-self-governing overseas territories. This theory is based on Resolution 1541 (XV) of the UN General Assembly of December 15, 1960 which defined a non-self-governing territory as “a territory which is geographically separate and is distinct ethnically and/or culturally from the country administering it;” see: *Principles Which Should Guide Members in Determining Whether or Not an Obligation Exists to Transmit the Information Called for under Article 73e of the Charter*, G.A. Res. 1541 (XV), Annex, 15 UN GAOR, Supp. (No. 16), UN Doc. A/4684 (1960), in: *Documents on autonomy and minority rights*, (ed.) H. Hannum, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht 1993, pp. 24–26.

The necessity of Greenland opening up to the outside world and actively seeking trading partners other than Denmark was also highlighted. The identified shortcomings of the island's economy mentioned the reliance on the export of raw materials or low value-added products, a relatively high proportion of low-skilled workers in the workforce and the import of numerous products which could be manufactured domestically. The Commission stressed the necessity of restructuring the expenditure of the public sector to make it consistent with the wealth of society. The long-term goal for Greenland was identified as achieving full economic independence.

The next part of the Report discussed matters of foreign policy and defense. The authors of the Report emphasized that it was of utmost importance for Greenland to be more independent in its foreign policy, in particular in matters of key importance for the development of the Greenlandic economy – fishing, hunting, environmental protection, tourism, transportation and trade. The fact that – being part of the Kingdom of Denmark – Greenland is a NATO member was indicated. According to the Commission, this meant that Greenland should be provided direct and unrestricted access to information on security. The Commission also supported the idea of introducing compulsory military service or alternative service for young Greenlanders.

The final part of the Report addressed matters of language. The Home Rule Act of 1978 stipulated that Greenlandic (*kalaallisut*) was the principal language on the island, whereas Danish must be “thoroughly” taught. The Commission resolved that *kalaallisut* should be both the principal and the official language of Greenland. At the same time, it urged for greater linguistic tolerance, which especially concerned the education sector, in which teaching at the post-elementary level was to a large extent based on materials written in Danish. It was stressed that a poor command of Danish (or another language apart from Greenlandic) might impede an individual's opportunities in terms of university education and the pursuit of a professional career.³ The possibility of using both languages in parliamentary debates was also advocated.

The Report of the Commission on Self-Governance was adopted in its entirety by the parliament of Greenland in November 2003. The analysis of this document demonstrates that it primarily addresses the internal situation in Greenland and the matters largely covered by the powers already granted to the local government. The authors of the Report both urged Greenland to reevaluate its relations with Denmark (for instance in the field of economy, foreign policy and defense policy) and encouraged the island to use the powers that had already been given to Greenlanders.

THE ACT ON GREENLAND SELF-GOVERNMENT (2009)

In order to continue elaborating on Greenlandic proposals, a decision was passed on June 21, 2004 to establish a Greenlandic-Danish Self-Government Commission.⁴

³ This issue remains valid even today: Ulrik P. Gad stresses that it is extremely difficult to find employment in the public sector in Greenland for someone speaking only *kalaallisut*, because “the system speaks Danish;” see: Gad, 2017b: 111.

⁴ The Commission was composed of representatives appointed by the Danish and Greenlandic governments respectively, the academia and external experts.

A jointly drafted scope of authority of the Commission envisaged that it would work out a proposal for a new agreement between Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark, taking into account the responsibilities already taken over by the autonomous authorities of the island. The new agreement was agreed to be firmly entrenched in the *status quo*, whereby Greenland was deemed to be part of the Kingdom of Denmark. The Commission commenced operations in September 2004 and reached its conclusion on April 17, 2008, by submitting a draft of a new Act on Greenland Self-Government. A referendum on adopting this document was held in Greenland on November 25, 2008; 75.54% of residents voted to increase the responsibilities of Greenland, 23.57% were against, and turnout was 71.96%. New regulations came into force on June 21, 2009 (*Act*, 2009).

The Act enables Greenland to take over a further 33 fields of responsibility, which were divided into two categories, with respect to time. Category one encompasses the fields which would be transferred to the Greenland authorities at a point in time fixed by them and includes:

- a) industrial injury compensation;
- b) the remaining areas under the health care area;
- c) road traffic;
- d) law regarding property and obligations;
- e) commercial diving.

The other list of responsibilities itemized the fields that would be transferred after negotiations with the relevant authorities of the Kingdom of Denmark, namely:

- 1) the prison and probation service;
- 2) passports;
- 3) the police and prosecution service;
- 4) administration of justice, including the establishment of courts of law;
- 5) criminal law;
- 6) the foreigners and border controls;
- 7) legal capacity;
- 8) family law;
- 9) succession law;
- 10) law practice;
- 11) the weapons area;
- 12) radio-based maritime emergency and security services;
- 13) radio communications;
- 14) the company, accounting and auditing area;
- 15) the food and veterinary area;
- 16) aviation;
- 17) intellectual property;
- 18) copyright;
- 19) shipwreck, wreckage, and degradation of depth;
- 20) security at sea;
- 21) ship registration and maritime matters;
- 22) charting;
- 23) buoyage, lighthouses and pilotage area;

- 24) the marine environment;
- 25) financial regulation and supervision;
- 26) the mineral resources area;
- 27) the working environment;
- 28) meteorology (*Act*, 2009).

Importantly, the areas indicated in the Schedule are not exclusive and the authorities of Denmark and Greenland may agree to expand this list by adding further fields of responsibility.

The most significant regulations pertain to the future status of the island. Chapter 8 of the Act on Self-Government contains an explicit statement that the decision regarding Greenland's independence will be taken by the people of Greenland. This will mean that the governments of Denmark and Greenland will commence negotiations to work out an agreement to this end. Having been adopted by the *Inatsisartut* (parliament of Greenland) and endorsed by a referendum in Greenland, the agreement should be concluded with the consent of the *Folketing* (Danish parliament), pursuant to Art. 19 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark.⁵ The details of the independence process will thus be jointly agreed by the authorities of Greenland and Denmark. Interestingly, the Act stipulates that independence will imply that Greenland assumes sovereignty over the territory of the island. According to Wilson, this provision should be interpreted as requiring Greenland to show both the *will* to obtain independence and the *potential* to assume responsibility for the island. He further observes that, so far, the Greenlandic authorities have focused on the external aspects of sovereignty (or independence from other authorities) and paid much less attention to the internal aspect (actually performing the functions resulting from Greenland's independence) (2017: 515).

Despite the undeniable importance of the 2009 agreement for the further advancement of self-government in Greenland, it remains a domestic act (taking the form of a parliamentary act) regulating relations between the state and its component, albeit a specific one. This means that, at least theoretically, the responsibilities vested in the authorities of this autonomous territory can be unilaterally revoked at any time (Sagan, Serzhanova, Wapińska, 2014: 126). Yet it would be difficult for this to occur in practice, given current Danish-Greenlandic relations, the more so as the preamble of the Act states that the agreement is concluded between the Danish and Greenlandic governments as "equal partners."

The new regulations have not had a significant impact on responsibilities in the fields of foreign affairs and defense policy.⁶ The Greenlandic government has the right to negotiate and conclude international agreements with foreign states and international organizations which entirely concern Greenland and exclusively relate to the scope of responsibilities that the island authorities have already taken over. Nevertheless, the government of Denmark should be notified about the intention to commence such talks

⁵ Pursuant to § 19, "[t]he King shall act on behalf of the Realm in international affairs, but, except with the consent of the Folketing, the King shall not undertake any act whereby the territory of the Realm shall be increased or reduced," *Konstytucja*, 1953.

⁶ Greenland was granted extended privileges to participate in foreign affairs in 2003 by virtue of the *Itilleq Declaration*, cf. Brańka, 2012.

and their progress. The same applies to the Danish government – the local government should always be notified if Denmark commences negotiations on international agreements which are of “particular importance” for Greenland. Additionally, before such agreements are concluded or terminated, they must be submitted to the Greenlandic government for comments. If Denmark signs an international agreement without the consent of the local government of Greenland, this should, as far as possible, have no impact on Greenland. Regarding internal affairs, Article 14 introduces a novel regulation whereby Greenland may join international organizations (along with Denmark or in its own name), provided that this is consistent with the status of Greenland. The application, however, should be submitted by the Danish government at the request of the Greenlandic government. As requested by Greenland, Greenlandic advisors may be appointed to the diplomatic missions of the Kingdom of Denmark to protect Greenland’s interests.

Pursuant to the Act, *kalaallisut* is the only official language and the Danish language, unlike in the 1978 Act, is not mentioned at all. It is clear that the ruling coalition is seeking to strengthen the local language and, by this token, entrench national identity. The idea of replacing Danish with English as an official language of Greenland⁷ has also emerged in political discourse. Danish is perceived in Greenland as a colonial language, whereas – due to the events of World War II – English is viewed as a language that opens the island up to the outside (Gad, 2017a: 117).

POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND INDEPENDENCE IN GREENLAND

Whereas the Report did not address complete sovereignty as one of the options, from the late 1990s, leading Greenlandic politicians increasingly pressed for full independence for the island. As early as 2003, the Minister for Self-Governance, Jørgen Wæver Johansen from the *Siumut* party announced that a referendum on Greenlandic independence should be organized by 2006 (*Greenland vote*, 2003). Josef Motzfeldt, leader of the *Inuit Ataqatigiit* (IA) party spoke in a similar vein: “We want to be recognized as citizens under international law. We would like to make independent decisions about our resources, run an independent foreign policy and defend our interests without having to ask Copenhagen for an opinion every single time” (*Niepodległość*, 2003).

The rise of independence sentiments is clearly noticeable in the evolution of the platforms of political parties, six of which currently operate on the political scene of Greenland.

Founded in 1977, *Siumut* (Forward) is the oldest party. With the exception of the 2009 elections, *Siumut* has ruled Greenland since the island became autonomous. This social democratic political party advocates a gradual expansion of the responsibilities of the local authorities until Greenland becomes independent. It is beyond doubt that *Siumut* has had the greatest influence on the direction of development of Greenland in recent decades. A liberal conservative party, *Atassut* (Feeling of Community) has traditionally opted for maintaining close relations with Denmark and re-integration

⁷ After a debate in *Inatsisartut* it was resolved to introduce English to first grade in elementary schools alongside Danish.

into the European Union. At present, a shift towards support for greater independence of the island can be noted. The party mainly attracts residents of smaller localities. The *Inuit Ataqatigiit* (Community of the People) is a socialist party demanding the abandonment of any formal relations with Denmark and the establishment of closer ties with the residents of Northern Canada and Alaska. Therefore, in order to ensure the necessary income for the island, the party is in favor of opening the Greenlandic market to foreign companies, especially in the mining sector, with the exception of uranium mining. A center-right party *Demokraatit* (Democrats) was founded in 2002 by a former member of *Siumut* – Per Berthelsen. A large proportion of party leaders are of Danish origin. It takes a cautious approach to independence and stresses the necessity of preparing Greenland for this eventuality, by, among other things, developing the education sector and increasing the economic independence of Greenland. The most left-wing party and, at the same time, one that advocates full independence of Greenland most explicitly is the *Inuit Party*, founded in 2013 after a schism in *Inuit Ataqatigiit*. A centrist party, *Partii Naleraq*, is the youngest party, which was founded in 2014 by a former member of *Siumut*, Hans Enoksen, Prime Minister of Greenland from 2002–2009.

The rhetoric of independence prevailed in the 2002 election campaign so strongly that none of the significant political parties denounced the idea of independence. At the time, the question was not whether to pursue independence, but rather when to obtain it and under what conditions. Yet none of the parties supported the idea of obtaining independence over a short period of time. Therefore, the election campaign focused on the challenges that Greenland would have to face in order to achieve actual economic independence and, on this basis, pursue further political responsibilities. The main topics addressed in this context revolved around the need to reform education, combat social problems, support the Greenlandic language and solve the recurrent problem of ensuring adequate access to and level of services to residents of small towns and villages scattered around the vast expanses of the island.

The 2009 election was won by the *Inuit Ataqatigiit*, which won 43.7% of votes and removed *Siumut* from power for the first time since 1979. Beyond doubt, the *Inuit Ataqatigiit* was the strongest supporter of full independence at the time. Its success should not be linked exclusively to its call for independence, though, but rather to Greenlandic society having grown tired of the scandals involving corruption, nepotism and the wasting of public funds associated with *Siumut* (Auchet, 2011: 963).

The political campaigns in 2013 and 2014 were dominated primarily by the matters of mining mineral resources in Greenland. The election in March 2013 was won by *Siumut*, and Aleqa Hammond was appointed as the first female Prime Minister of Greenland. The formerly ruling *Inuit Ataqatigiit*, which encouraged increased openness to foreign investment, suffered a narrow defeat, but – symptomatically – won a majority of votes in the capital of Greenland, Nuuk. This is understandable, since Greenlandic fishermen and hunters felt both cast aside and threatened by the vision of the island's development which was unconcerned with their traditional occupations. Residents of the largest city in Greenland, in turn, felt more convinced of the benefits to be gained from Greenland opening up to the outside, which could already be seen in the rapid development of Nuuk. Some former IA followers shifted their support to

the newly-founded *Partii Inuit*, which was also highly critical of excessively generous regulations pertaining to foreign entities. For instance, *Siumut* was against the Large-Scale Act,⁸ adopted in December 2012 under the rule of the IA. The most controversial provision of this regulation enables foreign investors to employ cheaper workers from outside Greenland. The *Siumut* leader, Aleqa Hammond, criticized the policy of the Prime Minister from IA, going as far as to say that “People feel that the prime minister speaks on behalf of investors from outside” (Scrutton, 2013).

Just nineteen months later, another parliamentary election was held in Greenland (in 2014). This was the aftermath of Aleqa Hammond stepping down as Prime Minister after a scandal caused by reports that private flights and accommodation for the Prime Minister and her family members, costing DKK 106,363 (ca. EUR 14,300), were paid for from state funds. Despite a huge scandal, *Siumut* won the elections on November 28, 2014 once again. The party was headed by an ex-policeman, Kim Kielsen, who took the office of Prime Minister. In order to form a stable parliamentary majority, *Siumut* entered into a coalition with the *Atassut* and *Demokraatit* parties. Their political agreement was entitled *Community – Security – Development*. Interestingly, the only thing these parties shared was their joint ambition to lift the ban on the extraction of radioactive resources in Greenland.⁹ On the eve of the election, Kim Kielsen ensured investors that they “can rely on our commitment to resource extraction” and his party seeks to create “a secure, stable, long-term investment environment” (Crouch, 2014).

Table 1

The 2014 election results in Greenland

Parties	Votes	% of votes	Mandaty
Siumut	10,108	34.3	11
Inuit Ataqatigiit	9,783	33.2	11
Democrats	3,469	11.8	4
Partii Naleraq	3,423	11.6	3
Atassut	1,919	6.5	2
Partii Inuit	477	1.6	0
Inni	22	0.1	0
Turnout 72.9%			

Source: Qinersineq, <http://qinersineq.gl/default.aspx?electionGuid=b0578019-e04f-4cde-92fa-6a3355cd383d&language=en-GB> (12.12.2016).

Significantly, in the 2014 election, more attention was given to economic matters than to independence, focusing on the diversification of Greenlandic economy and increasing proceeds from fishing or developing tourism, to name just a few. This was more than understandable given the problems Greenland was facing at the time. In 2013, Greenland’s GDP dropped by 1.9%. On top of that, just before the election, Finance Minister Vittus Qujaukitsoq had to announce highly disconcerting statistics about the economy of Greenland. The budget deficit in 2014 reached DKK 275 million, where a budget surplus of DKK 21 million had been forecast (Yurtaslan,

⁸ For more on *Large-Scale Act* see: https://www.plesner.com/insights/artikler/2013/10/the%20large-scale%20projects%20act?sc_lang=da-DK (21.12.2017).

⁹ See section *Greenland’s mineral resources* below.

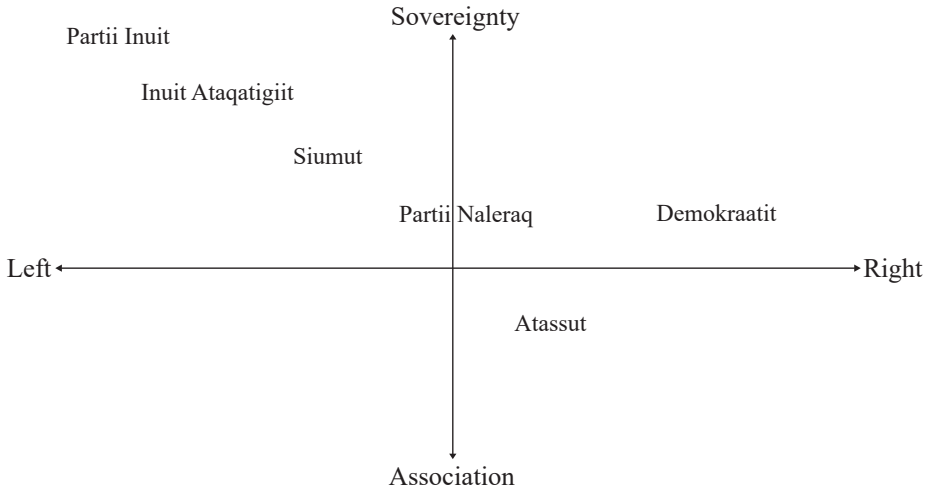


Figure 1. Party system in Greenland

Source: U. P. Gad (2017a), *National Identity Politics and Postcolonial Sovereignty Games: Greenland, Denmark, and the European Union*, Copenhagen, p. 24.

2014). Whichever party was to win the election, economic matters had to come to the forefront.

The coalition formed in 2014 did not last very long. In October 2016, the government was restructured significantly and *Siumut* turned to the opposition for cooperation. In this way, a highly robust coalition was formed by *Siumut*, IA and *Partii Naleraq*.¹⁰ In the 2014 election, these parties collected a total of over 79% of votes, which translated to 25 out of 31 parliamentary seats. The manifestos of these parties are relatively similar. The very first sentence of the coalition agreement, titled *Equality – Security – Development*, directly declares that Greenland has chosen “an irreversible path towards independence,” and this process requires both political stability and national unity alike (*Coalition*, 2016). For the first time, the government was vested with the formal task of preparing the process of gaining independence.¹¹

It is a paradox that the difference between the coalition members concerns one of the most sensitive issues addressed during the election campaign, namely uranium mining. The coalition agreement says that the parties will seek to ensure optimal conditions to foster the development of the mining industry, thereby making the island attractive for foreign investors. Speaking about uranium mining, it was explicitly indicated that both IA and *Partii Naleraq* were for maintaining the ban on mining its deposits, and *Siumut* supported uranium mining to the extent to which it does not have an adverse impact on public health and the natural environment of Greenland. To make

¹⁰ The *Partii Naleraq* was established only two years after a faction within *Siumut* split away and formed its own party. The electoral performance of the party headed by H. Enosken (11.6% and 3 seats) was the greatest surprise of the 2014 election.

¹¹ This was symbolically manifested by the establishment of a new Ministry of Independence, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture.

the coalition possible, the parties resolved to postpone this contentious issue until it “becomes relevant to consider new applications concerning the potential extraction of uranium and other radioactive deposits” (*Coalition...*, 2016).

The coalition agreement did not address two sensitive matters in Greenlandic-Danish relations. One concerned continued work of the Reconciliation Commission documenting the colonial past of Greenland under Danish rule; the other one – replacing Danish with English as the main foreign language taught in schools (Breum, 2016).

Although no date was indicated in the coalition agreement as to when the divorce with Denmark would take place, in April 2017, the Greenlandic government appointed a seven-strong Constitutional Commission. Its task was to draft the declaration of independence and a preliminary version of the new constitution. The original timeframe of 2–3 years was shortened and now the Commission is scheduled to present the results of its work by the end of 2018 (Finne, 2016).

The majority of Greenlanders are for regaining independence. A survey was conducted in December 2016, which showed that 64% of respondents found the island’s independence to be of “great importance” or of “importance,” while it was “insignificant” for 24% of respondents and 12% had no opinion on this matter (McGwin, 2016). Interestingly, the supporters of independence prevailed in every age group, but proportion of individuals supporting independence rose in correlation with the age of the respondents, reaching 70% in the 60–69 age bracket. The smallest proportion of advocates of independence was found among young people; in the 18–29 age bracket 56% declared their support for independence while as many as 23% were undecided. It is highly significant, however, that the survey questions did not mention the possible outcome of Greenland losing Danish subsidies in the case of gaining independence. For the sake of comparison, the residents of another autonomous territory of Denmark, the Faroe Islands, were asked the second question, which resulted in 48% of the respondents rejecting independence if it was associated with losing Danish financing (McGwin, 2016).

So far, Greenland has not discussed the details of the independence process, its timeframe and, primarily, the profits and losses associated with it when compared to other possible scenarios, such as the formation of an association or federation (Wilson, 2017: 516). This may be the explanation for why even the pro-independence Greenlandic politicians see Greenland obtaining full independence in 20–30 years’ time. Independence remains to be a collective aspiration rather than a precisely defined political aim (Wilson, 2017: 518).

DANISH-GREENLANDIC RELATIONS

One of the greatest challenges in present Danish-Greenlandic relations concerns financing of the autonomy. Since autonomy was established, Denmark has been subsidizing it on an annual basis. At present, pursuant to Art. 5 of the Act of Greenland Self-Government from 2009, Greenland receives ca. DKK 3.7 billion from Denmark,¹²

¹² Pursuant to the Act on Self-Government, the subsidy amounts to DKK 3,439.6 million (as of 2009) and is index-linked on the basis of a wage-price ratio. In 2016 it was DKK 3,682.3 million.

which accounts for nearly 25% of the GDP of Greenland (as of 2017). The matter of finance may become essential in the campaign for independence. Some economists, including Professor Martin Paldam from the University of Århus, have long believed that aid from Denmark is used inefficiently and the economy of the island relies excessively on these subsidies. Apart from allegations that public resources are wasted, it is also frequently argued that Danish aid is pointless, since it impairs the competitiveness of Greenlandic economy (Paldam, 1994; Mørkøre, 1999).

One of the challenges to be tackled by the government of Greenland in the near future concerns reforming the public sector. At present, public administration employs over 10,000 people out of the total 26,000 people in the labor market. This is especially revealing when compared to the leading sectors of fishing, hunting and agriculture, which employ slightly over 4,000 Greenlanders (*Greenland in Figures*, 2017: 16). As early as the 1980s, Jens Dahl identified the problem of what he called the “excessive expansion of self-government” (Dahl, 1986). Several decades have passed since, but this seems to be a most apt diagnosis of the disease Greenland has long suffered from (Lythans, 1999: 115–125). The Greenlandic administration apparatus is modeled on the Danish administration, a pattern which clearly works in Europe but which was implemented on the world’s largest island without the necessary modifications: “the character, power and scope of the activities of the Greenlandic administration are primarily the product of Danish presence and not the outcome of the development of social classes” (Dahl, 2003: 135). To a large extent, this situation results from Danish policy in the 1960s. Danish reformers were guided by the idea of Greenlanders keeping their traditional occupations (hunting and fishing), while the Danish were to supply professional clerical staff employed wherever university education and specialization were indispensable. In the mid-20th century this policy was perceived as protecting the traditional lifestyle, but it actually resulted in excessive paternalism (Lyck, 1997: 21; Grydehøj, 2016).

The excessive expansion of administration in Greenland can be seen in several dimensions. Firstly, a significant proportion of the highest administrative offices on the island are held by Danes, or by people educated in Denmark. The whole apparatus would be unable to function without this “imported knowledge.” Secondly, the size and horizontal structure of the administration are way beyond what Greenland needs; even small villages have extensive public services. Thirdly, all this administration is not financed by Greenland itself, but is dependent on Danish aid. The only solution, suggested by Dahl and still valid, is to construct (restructure) a Greenlandic administration which is adapted to its actual needs (Karlsson, 2006: 33). During a debate on Danish-Greenlandic relations held in the *Folketing* in 2017, discussing the matter of the possible full independence of the island, the Danish Prime Minister Hans Løkke Rasmussen went as far as to say that the autonomous Greenlandic authorities found it difficult to exercise the powers they had already taken over (McGwin, 2017b). Greenland is beginning a long-awaited, but also controversial, discussion on whether to maintain or slash the number of municipalities and diversify the prices for basic goods and services in relation to the location of a given place. Provided that infrastructure is adequately developed, some municipalities would be able to ensure growth and employment in the fishing and tourism sectors, among others. Yet the territories which

lack the essential development conditions will pose a challenge. It has been suggested that their residents should be relocated to other parts of the island, but such proposals arouse profound discontent amongst local populations (McGwin, 2017c).

The analysis of the standpoint taken by the Kingdom of Denmark with respect to Greenlandic independence has evolved. The government in Copenhagen has accepted the fact that Greenland (and the Faroe Islands) has taken a gradual, but most likely irreversible, path towards independence.

Delivering their annual speeches inaugurating the sessions of *Folketing*, the Danish Prime Ministers traditionally address the matter of relations between Denmark and the autonomous territories. Visions of how these relations may develop differ, but the government of Denmark believes that the future of Greenland and the Faroe Islands should be decided by their residents. The Danish government understands the postulates submitted by the islanders, in particular when proposed changes do not undermine the unity of the Kingdom of Denmark. Recently, the relations between Denmark and the autonomous territories seem to be governed by the “multiplicity in unity” approach.

Speaking about modernizing self-governance in the Faroe Islands and Greenland in 2001, Prime Minister A. F. Rasmussen stressed that his government sought to maintain the unity of the Kingdom as a “community of three equal peoples” (*Prime*, 2001). He believed that the historical, cultural and family relations between Denmark and the autonomous territories are strong enough to make it “natural” to stay together, helping one another.” He also stressed that the Kingdom of Denmark is not founded on coercion and cannot “become a straitjacket” (*Prime*, 2003). After the Self-Government Act, whose very preamble indicates a pro-independence direction, came into force, Copenhagen began to emphasize the benefits of collaboration within the Kingdom. It was emphasized that the Danish community was a unique solution which ensured greater power and protection in the face of economic challenges (*Prime*, 2014). In response to Greenland appointing a commission in charge of drafting a Constitution, Denmark expressed its profound understanding of the island’s desires, but stated that the regulations in the future constitution would have to conform to principles binding in the Kingdom of Denmark (*Prime*, 2015; *Prime*, 2017).

Whereas the need to maintain the unity of the Kingdom is repeatedly stressed, it is also emphasized that the self-determination of peoples is a fundamental principle and that the Danish community ensures freedom of choice (*Prime*, 2007; *Prime*, 2008). Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt made it clear that, in spite of the bonds which tie Denmark and Greenland and the Faroe Islands together, “naturally, we are also three different countries” (*Prime*, 2014). It was also stated that it is the Greenlandic people “who determine the future relations with Denmark” (*Prime*, 2011).

It is an official approach taken by the highest representatives of the Kingdom of Denmark to stress the necessity and benefits of maintaining a ternary Kingdom while simultaneously acknowledging the identity of Greenland (and the Faroe Islands). Very clear references to Greenland’s “ingratitude” towards Denmark, in particular concerning financial resources for the island, frequently appear in public discourse. Danes view these subsidies as a certain kind of “charity” (Grydehøj, 2016: 106) and, therefore, interpret the postulates of separation from the motherland as disloyalty at best. According to Grydehøj, Denmark would like “Greenlanders to love them for present-

ing Greenland with opportunities for self-sufficiency and independence, but Denmark would rather Greenlanders not grasp these opportunities” (*ibid.*). The problem then is not the subsidies for the island, which amount to DKK 3.7 billion per year, but Greenland’s lack of appreciation for this gesture.

A question arises here as to what benefits Denmark gets from retaining Greenland within its realm. Taking a broader perspective, it turns out that the Danish subsidy should not necessarily be viewed as an act of pure charity.

Firstly, Denmark is Greenland’s main trade partner and the vast majority of goods bought by Greenlanders come from Denmark: the value of imports brought from the homeland amounted to USD 427 million in 2016, accounting for over 72% of total imports to Greenland. Additionally, Greenland hosts a significant number of Danish laborers with temporary contracts, who will spend at least part of their earnings in Denmark. Greenland is therefore dealing with the process named by Grydehøj the “permanent leakage of capital back to the motherland” (2016: 108). Yet geopolitical benefits prevail over financial matters. It is thanks to Greenland that Denmark is legitimized as a member of the Arctic club. Thanks to its overseas territories, Denmark is connected with a dense network of Atlantic and Arctic ties, is a member of numerous international organizations and is represented at different international forums (Brańka, 2012). Having Greenland has recently allowed Denmark to become a crucial actor in international relations, able to take an active part in talks on the strategic role of the Arctic. This is about such crucial matters as the security of this region, scientific research, transportation, fisheries, and climate change, as well as indigenous populations.

The analysis of relations between Denmark and Greenland justifies the conclusion that the former has come to terms with the possible declaration of independence by the latter, which is currently treated as an equal partner. This is not to say that Copenhagen would happily welcome this scenario. The argument that ‘it’s better to be together’ dominates in the discourse in Denmark. Nevertheless, one can hardly avoid discussion on the possibility of independence, especially given the work on the constitution that has commenced in Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Although both these documents will apply only locally, they are a clear manifestation of the path taken by the main political forces in these areas.

Another interesting matter concerns the question of future Danish-Greenlandic relations. Some authors urge for these relations to be profoundly remodeled (Gad, 2017a), thereby abandoning the postcolonial rhetoric of ‘donor’ (Danish subsidies) and ‘recipient’ (Greenlanders). The continued existence of a ternary Kingdom of Denmark is viewed very differently on the continent and on the island, and these two perceptions seem to be hardly reconcilable. The attitude of Danish ‘responsibility’ for the development of the island prevails in Denmark, often employing the metaphor of mother and child (Gad, 2017a: 111–112). As self-government develops in Greenland and takes over further responsibilities and tasks, Greenland finds it increasingly difficult to accept such a hierarchical structure. Whereas the islanders do not reject relations with Denmark, at least in the short term, they would like to build their future relations with it as an equal partner.¹³

¹³ As confirmed in the preamble to the Act on Self-Government of 2009, among other things.

GREENLAND'S MINERAL RESOURCES AS AN (UNCERTAIN) FOUNDATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Arctic is one of the last territories that remain to be explored and exploited. A race for access to its deposits of mineral resources started in the 2000s. The U.S. Geological Survey estimated then that the Arctic holds one-fifth of the world's untapped reserves of natural gas and crude oil (13% and 30% respectively) (Gauthier, Bird, 2011: 1175). In this context, global attention has also focused on Greenland.¹⁴

The Self-Government Act provides for revenue from the extraction of mineral resources in Greenland to be managed by the Greenlandic authorities. Chapter 3 of the same document also stipulates that once the Greenlandic authorities achieve a certain level of income from this source, Danish subsidies will be reduced.¹⁵ When the subsidy is reduced to zero, the government of Greenland and the government of Denmark will commence negotiations on future economic relations (*Act*, 2009).

Many authors forecast that the natural resources of Greenland will ensure the island's economic independence from Denmark, thereby removing the greatest obstacle on the path to full independence. The significance of resources such as crude oil, natural gas, zinc ores, gold and diamonds has typically been stressed. Recently, however, more attention has been paid to access to rare earth metals and the extraction of uranium, which causes the greatest controversy. The large Greenlandic resources of rare earth metals,¹⁶ which are in very high demand, could potentially make Greenland one of the crucial players in this sector, especially as climate change and global warming are likely to facilitate access to and exploitation of these resources (Boersma, Foley, 2014; Stephens, 2013; Borgerson, 2013).

This optimism is toned down by analyses indicating that the extraction of natural resources may contribute to the development of the island, but may not automatically lead to independence, as this process is much more complicated and multidimensional (Wilson, 2017).

According to Wilson, at present, there is only one mine operating in Greenland. It opened in May 2017, and its deposits are forecast to last for nine years. Another mine is under construction, and there are no binding decisions concerning other projects. The plans to explore hydrocarbons look even less optimistic: nine out of the sixteen licensed entities are withdrawing their operations, and the remaining ones are not planning trial drills in the foreseeable future (Wilson, 2017: 513). In 2016, there were no offers submitted to search for crude oil over a period of ten years in the region of the

¹⁴ Natural resources were mined in Greenland as early as in mid-19th century. Due to technical limitations and depletion of the resources, the last mine in Maamorilik was closed down in 1990, and Greenland has become an island without mines.

¹⁵ If revenue from mineral resource activities in Greenland exceeds DKK 75 million in a given year, the Danish subsidy will be reduced by an amount corresponding to half the revenue which exceeds DKK 75 million in the following year, see *Act*, 2009, Chapter 3, Item 8.

¹⁶ The demand for rare earth metals is growing as they are indispensable in the production of modern electronic devices, electric cars and wind turbines, to name a few. The current supply of these resources was generated nearly exclusively by China, which was estimated to provide ca. 80–90% (105,000 out of 124,000 tons obtained globally). Cf. https://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/rare_earths/mcs-2016-raree.pdf (3.12.2017).

Disco Bay and the adjacent Nuussua Peninsula. The same happened in 2017, during an auction for permits in the region of the Baffin Bay. This is unlikely to change in 2018 (McGwin, 2017a). The strategy of mining crude oil and natural gas 2014–2018¹⁷ (*Greenland's oil*, 2017) envisaged that one to two new offshore drilling projects will be conducted annually. While the deposits in eastern Greenland arouse greater hopes there have been no new drills in western Greenland since 2011 (Kristiansen, 2016).

A report was drawn up by the Leett Law Firm, the Danish Centre for the Environment and Energy and PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2013. It concluded that the taxes paid by the companies extracting mineral resources will not have a considerable impact on the budget of Greenland (Larsen, Juhl, 2016). A similar conclusion follows also from the 2014 analysis by scholars from the University of Copenhagen and University of Greenland. The proceeds generated by the mining industry will surely have an advantageous influence on the development of the island, but they will not be able to replace the whole Danish subsidy. For this to happen, Greenland would have to launch 24 Large-Scale Projects¹⁸ in the mining sector by 2040. According to the authors of the report, this is an “unrealistic” scenario (*To the benefit*, 2014: 19). The Danish newspaper *Politikien* commented on the report, concluding that “thirteen experts have ruined the dreams of Greenland’s independence” (Breum, 2017: 136).

The key reasons for investment decisions in the mining sector of Greenland slowing down are as follows:

- a) relatively low prices for raw materials;
- b) high costs of labor and of the necessary investment;
- c) lack of qualified labor force;
- d) demanding climate on the island.

The existence of mineral resources in Greenland is unquestionable, even if their exact size and the technological feasibility of extracting them are uncertain. This does not mean, however, that the development of this sector will have a significant influence on the standard of living of the population, at least in the short term, or that it will automatically mean that the Danish subsidy can be given up. Studies have already shown that in order to make full use of potential resources, an appropriate workforce will have to be trained. Greenlanders have practically no experience in large-scale extraction of crude oil and other mineral resources. A number of different fields of life on the island will be transformed: new services will have to emerge, and infrastructure will have to expand. Given the lack of local workforce, workers will have to be brought in from the outside. This is the scenario envisaged by the authors of the Danish-Greenlandic report from 2014. They pointed to the risk of Greenlanders becoming a “minority in their own state” as investments develop (*To the benefit*, 2014: 23). In 2013, London Mining Plc announced its plans to build an iron ore mine in the vicinity of the Isua geological belt, 150 km away from the capital city of Nuuk, for USD 2.3 billion. The company estimated that ca. 3,000 workers would be employed in the construction of

¹⁷ *Greenland's oil and mineral strategy 2014-2018*, Government of Greenland, https://www.govmin.gl/images/stories/about_bmp/publications/Greenland_oil_and_mineral_strategy_2014-2018_ENG.pdf (12.12.2017).

¹⁸ The Greenlandic Large-Scale Projects Act defines large scale projects as those in excess of DKK 5 billion.

the mine, only 10% of whom would be locals, while the rest were to come from China (Breum, 2015: 128).¹⁹ Another project, Kvanefjeld, envisages the construction of the most promising mine and a port, employing approximately 2,000 workers. This mining facility is expected to offer permanent employment to ca. 800 workers, including 300 locals (Walsh, 2017). Although the number of foreign workers does not seem very high in this case, this should be seen in relation to the quite small populations living in different regions of Greenland; there are approximately 1,400 people living at present in Naraq, near Kvanefjeld.

The development of the mining industry may harm the traditional sources of income in Greenland, i.e. fishing and tourism. There is also the question of the influence of the new industries on the local culture and traditions, especially in the context of the inflow of outside workers. Finally, there are concerns about the capacity of the relatively small internal market of Greenland to absorb the profits generated by the forecast development of mining facilities.

In conclusion, it may be said that the advocates of Greenland's opening its doors to external investors (and workers) argue that this would allow Greenland to reduce its financial dependence on Denmark and diversify its economy. The opponents stress the threat posed by the extraction of resources to the extremely sensitive natural environment of the Arctic and possible social costs. It therefore appears that the equation 'proceeds from natural resources = independence' is an oversimplification and the economy of Greenland requires more profound transformations, involving greater diversification, among other things (Wilson, 2017: 514).

Yet the greatest emotions raised during the parliamentary elections in 2013 and 2014 were associated with the topic of the extraction of uranium and rare earth metals. From 1988, the Danish anti-nuclear policy also imposed a blanket ban on the extraction of radioactive minerals in Greenland (the so-called zero-tolerance policy).

The discussion on whether or not to abandon this ban began in Greenland. Prime Minister A. Hammond from *Siumut* argued that "we cannot have increasing unemployment and growing costs of living when our economy is at a standstill. Therefore, we have to abandon the 'zero tolerance for uranium' policy right now" (*Greenland votes...*, 2013).²⁰ After a heated debate, the local parliament decided by a single vote (15:14) to do away with the regulations from the 1980s and allow radioactive minerals²¹ to be mined. The question remained as to whether the Danish parliament should also approve these changes, in spite of the regulations in the Self-Government Act whereby the authorities of Greenland took over the extraction of mineral resources. One interpretation is that matters of defense and security are the responsibility of the central government, and mining uranium falls under this category. Additionally, the complex regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and of EURATOM related to uranium exports and the extent to which they apply to Greenland as an overseas territory of the European Union are also significant in this context

¹⁹ The project was never implemented because London Mining Plc. went bankrupt.

²⁰ This matter gained prime importance in 2008, when an Australian company Greenland Minerals and Energy Ltd (GMEL) announced its intention to abandon its plans to mine rare earth metals in Kvanefjeldt unless it obtained a permission to extract uranium ore; see: Larsen, Juhl, 2016.

²¹ Nearly 400 people in Nuuk staged a protest against this decision; see: Breum, 2017: 161.

(Freedman, 2017; Brańka, 2007). Having examined this issue, the Danish government announced that it would not block the decisions made by the parliament of Greenland (Jacobsen, 2014). In January 2016, the government of Denmark and government of Greenland signed a package of four agreements on future cooperation in the field of uranium mining and export, including matters of security and the supervision of dual-use technology and products for military and civilian purposes (*Denmark and Greenland...*, 2016).²²

At present, the Kvanefjeld project in southern Greenland is attracting most attention. Its purpose is to extract rare earth metals,²³ uranium and zinc. Importantly, it is practically impossible to mine valuable rare earth metals in this region without mining uranium ore. The deposits there are enormous. Using Australian JORC²⁴ standards, they have been estimated at 1,010 million Mg. This would make it possible to operate a mining facility which would be the second largest manufacturer of rare earth metals and fifth largest manufacturer of uranium in the world.²⁵ According to different estimates, it could operate for a period of 37 to 100 years (*Stanowisko...*, 2017). The project will be operated by an Australian company, Greenland Minerals and Energy Ltd (GMEL).

Such a huge investment project arouses concerns as to its impact on the natural environment. In March 2017, the Danish section of an environmental organization, NOAH Friends of the Earth, published its opinion on the environmental impact study of the Kvanefjeld project. The opinion was clearly negative, accusing the study of underestimating the amount of waste and radiation; another criticism concerns the idea of discharging liquid waste into the Taseq lake (*Stanowisko*, 2017), all the more so as the lake is too small and GMEL is planning to build two additional dams. Having achieved its full production capacity, the mine would process three million tons of ore annually. Given the massive scale of this project, there are concerns about the risk of environmental contamination with radioactive and non-radioactive substances while, due to the low average content of uranium in the ore (0.0266%), the amount of uranium obtained will still be disproportionately small compared to environmental damage (*Stanowisko*, 2017).²⁶

Today, it is generally agreed that the proceeds from the mining industry will not enable Greenland to become economically independent in the short term or give up the entire Danish subsidy. Conversely, Greenland might become dependent on foreign businesses instead and experience profound social transformations. Although Green-

²² To simplify the matter, it can be assumed that the agreement gave Greenland the right to mine uranium, but exports must be supervised by the Danish authorities.

²³ Such as praseodymium, terbium and neodymium.

²⁴ Joint Ore Reserves Committee, see: <http://www.jorc.org/>.

²⁵ Uranium deposits are estimated at 600,000 tons, the second largest after those in Australia. Deposits of rare earth metals are estimated at 11.1 million tons. However, Greenlandic resources may in fact be even larger, because the entire Ilimaussaq complex has not been examined in detail so far. See: Larsen, Juhl, 2016.

²⁶ The risk of environmental damage is also indicated in a report drawn up by Jan Willem Storm van Leeuwen in 2014, see: *Uranium mining at Kvanefjeld*, <http://www.ecocouncil.dk/en/releases/articles-pressreleases/chemicals-and-climate/2348-new-report-confirms-that-the-kvanefjeld-mining-project-is-not-sustainable> (18.12.2017).

land lacks one of the basic foundations of an independent state, the support for its independence continues to be high, being the top issue on the political agenda. The changes introduced by the Self-Government Act are so profound that the Act has been dubbed a ‘provisional constitution’ for the period of Greenland forging its independence (Sagan, Serzhanova, Wapińska, 2014: 130). The prevailing view is that the rapid severance of all contacts with Denmark could bring about a deterioration of the living standards of Greenlanders (or a drastic rise in taxes). This means that the matter under negotiation is not so much whether or not Greenland has the *right* to declare independence (because this has been decided in the 2009 Self-Government Act, among other things), but rather if it should take this step. The independence of mini-states (Greenland being one of them in terms of its population) does not ensure their greater influence in international relations. It remains an open question as to whether Greenland would be able to run a more effective foreign policy being an independent state in legal terms but having no Danish subsidy or diplomatic support.

Whatever the ultimate result of the current changes, the ongoing process of Greenland building its increasing independence is almost a model example of a nation exercising its right to self-determination, both in the internal and external sense.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the process of development of Greenland's autonomy, especially vis-à-vis the Act on Greenland Self-Government of 2009, which ensures that decisions on the future status of the island will be made by the people of Greenland. Compared to other entities, Greenland is the only Arctic territory which can feasibly gain independence. This study also discusses the relations between Denmark and Greenland in terms of post-colonial relations between the former metropolis/colonizer and the island, outlining also the discourse on independence in Greenland. The hypothesis posed in the paper is that the proceeds from mineral extraction will not enable Greenland to become economically independent and abandon Danish subsidies, and that the process of gaining sovereignty might result in Greenland becoming dependent on external powers which will have a considerable impact on social relations on the island. This means that the matter under negotiation is not so much whether or not Greenland has the *right* to declare independence, but rather if it should take this step.

Keywords: Greenland, Kingdom of Denmark, autonomy, self-determination, Arctic

GRENLANDIA – OD AUTONOMII KU (NIE)PODLEGŁOŚCI

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł stawia sobie za cel analizę dotychczasowego procesu rozwoju autonomii terytorialnej Grenlandii, szczególnie w kontekście Aktu o Samorządzie z 2009 r., w którym uzgodniono, że decyzja o przyszłym statusie wyspy przynależeć będzie do narodu grenlandzkiego. W ujęciu porównawczym, Grenlandia pozostaje w regionie Arktyki jedynym autonomicznym terytorium, które ma możliwość uzyskania niepodległości. Praca podejmuje także temat relacji Danii z Grenlandią, w kontekście pokolonialnych stosunków między dawną metropolią a wyspą, zarysowując również dyskurs niepodległościowy na największej wyspie świata. Postawiona hipoteza zakłada, że dochody z przemysłu wydobywczego nie umożliwią szybkiego uniezależnienia się ekonomicznego wyspy i całkowitej rezygnacji z duńskiej subwencji, a proces dochodzenia do niepodległości będzie niósł ryzyko uzależnienia się od sił zewnętrznych, znacząco wpływając na stosunki społeczne na wyspie. W konsekwencji, oznacza to, że na stole negocjacyjnym pozostaje nie tyle pytanie czy Grenlandia ma *prawo* ogłosić niepodległość, ale czy powinna na taki krok się zdecydować.

Słowa kluczowe: Grenlandia, Królestwo Danii, autonomia, samostanowienie, Arktyka