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Greenland's foreign policy strategy being revisited

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In February 2024, Greenland published a strategy for foreign, security and defense policy, which was a significant update of a foreign policy strategy from 2011 and was intended to guide Greenland's foreign relations and international political economy for a decade until 2033. Now, less than two years later, the strategy may be revised to adapt the (con)text in light of geopolitical complexities since the start of 2025 and the new coalition government formed in Greenland after the Inatsisartut election in March.

In late 2024 and especially in the first months of this year, the international attention on Greenland became intense, with the new-elect US president repeating earlier statements from 2019 about acquiring Greenland one way or another. Even more worrying was that the Trump-administration failed to provide a credible commitment in early 2025 that the US would not annex Greenland by armed force. This and other developments, including geopolitical as well as domestic politics, have sparked discussions about whether the recent foreign, security, and defense strategy should be amended.

One could argue that it was cumbersome to publish a purported decade-long strategy at a time of instability and regional conflict in the Arctic, as we have witnessed for most of the decade thus far. Last year's strategy mentioned that it could be updated on an ongoing basis as needed, and this may happen sooner rather than later.

Although there is no official plan yet as to when and how much the 2024 strategy will be changed, the coalition agreement from March 2025 for the newly elected Naalakkersuisut stated that, given the changed geopolitical situation, the strategy will be reviewed for updates by the ratifying political parties. After the March elections, all four of those parties are now in a coalition government with 23 out of 31 seats in parliament. Naleraq is the only opposition party, and at the same time also the only party that chose not to support the strategy in early 2024.

After the election, Vivian Motzfeldt from Siumut remains Naalakkersuisoq (minister) for Foreign Affairs, even though her party fared poorly in March and a change of Siumut's party leadership to Aleqa Hammond in June sparked rumors about the ministerial post or questions regarding Siumut's continued participation in the coalition.

Furthermore, it currently appears that there is not yet a deep-rooted consensus, neither within nor across political parties, regarding Greenland's future alliances. Politicians from Demokraatit and Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA) in particular have stated that they want to revisit the 2024-strategy, and both senior diplomats and several ministers have reiterated this position.

A forthcoming revision of the strategy does not emanate solely from domestic politics or the new government headed by a (social) liberal Prime Minister for the first time in Greenland's political history, but to a large extent reflects the broader geopolitical situation – and particularly with increasingly complicated Greenlandic relations with the US.

For example, the chair of Inatsisartut's Foreign and Security Policy Committee, Pipaluk Lynge (IA), stated in early summer to the local media outlet *KNR*: "*The world has changed, and the future is unpredictable. That is why I believe that we must adapt our foreign policy strategy, even though it is from last year*." To another Greenlandic media outlet, *Sermitsiaq*, she alluded to a Trump-induced increased focus on alternative international partners, as relations with the US became increasingly tense leading up to the election in March. She advocated that Greenland should send an explicit, clear, and distinct message to the outside world that Greenland wants to strengthen other alliances, now that the alliance dynamics with the US have changed.

One of the most likely reasons to reopen and revise the strategy text is to tone down the strategy's overt focus on the US and to upscale the EU and other potential partners (including Canada) in relation to international cooperation. Shortly after the strategy was published in February 2024, Nasiffik-colleague Jeppe Strandsbjerg and myself wrote an op-ed on the strategy in *Altinget Arktis*, which was further elaborated in *Arctic Yearbook* in late 2024. Here, we were puzzled that the EU played so little role in the 2024 strategy while the US played such a prominent role. I expect that this balance will be revisited.

Recently, some Greenlandic politicians have lamented that a roadmap for a revision of the strategy has not been put in place, despite the coalition agreement's signal to this effect back in March. The criticism has been forwarded, among others, by the aforementioned chair of the parliamentary committee, Pipaluk Lynge, including whether it is possible to renew the foreign policy strategy this year. The sole opposition party Naleraq has criticized Naalakkersuisoq for Foreign Affairs for publicly claiming that all parties, and thus also Naleraq, have been invited to negotiations on a new foreign policy strategy, a claim that Naleraq rejects.

Although it remains unknown when and how much can be expected in terms of a policy strategy rewrite, it seems likely that the 2024 document will be amended by the new Greenlandic government. While some ambitions in the strategy have already been fulfilled, notably the appointment of the new Arctic Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark from Greenland, Kenneth Høegh, shortly before the Kingdom of

Denmark with Greenland in the lead took over the chairship of the Arctic Council in May, the westward focus on the US is likely to be reconsidered.

The most likely outcome, based on the current debate in Greenland, is not a comprehensive rewrite or a completely new strategy, but an adjustment to certain sections after discussions between political parties and in negotiation with the Government of Greenland and the top diplomats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nuuk.

Three oft-cited slogans can sum up much of Greenlandic foreign policy in recent years: The first was introduced in an elegant tweet in 2019 with the words: "Open for business – not for sale". The second is "Nothing about us without us," which is the subtitle of the 2024-strategy and used in many international fora. The third, which emerged in the spring of 2025, is: "We don't want to be Danes, but we don't want to be Americans either".

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Note: This is a translated, slightly revised version of an op-ed published in Altinget Arktis in Danish.