Report of the Visit to Nuuk, Greenland
February 2026



All-Party Parliamentary Group for Greenland

APPG for Greenland Delegation

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Meeting with former Prime Minister of Greenland, Kuupik Kleist



Meeting with former Prime Minister of Greenland, Aleqa Hammond

Introduction

I have no doubt that generations hence will view President Trump's threat to "own and control" Greenland, by "either the easy way or the hard way", as being a major turning point in the relationship between Europe and the United States of America.

How significant it will be for the future of the NATO alliance remains to be seen, but the fact that the US President repeatedly refused to rule out military action in order to illegally seize the sovereign territory of a long-time ally suggests that those decades-long security guarantees, that we had all taken for granted, have fundamentally changed.

At the height of the crisis in mid-January, the APPG on Greenland invited Naaja Nathanielsen, Greenland's Minister for Industry, Raw Materials, Mining and Energy, to Westminster to brief parliamentarians on the impact President Trump's threats were having on the roughly 56,500 people who populate the world's largest island. Such was the interest in her visit that much of her subsequent press conference was broadcast live on Reuters, BBC and Sky News.

Following Minister Nathanielsen's visit, the APPG decided to reciprocate, and a cross-party delegation of UK parliamentarians from the APPG visited Nuuk between 9th -12th February 2026. The delegation, consisted of Brendan O'Hara MP (SNP), Liz Saville Roberts MP (Plaid Cymru), Alicia Kearns MP (Conservative) and Cat Smith MP (Labour).

We went to Nuuk primarily to learn more about Greenland, its history, including the fractious and complex post-colonial relationship it has with Denmark, and to find out how the US threats have affected ordinary Greenlanders, and what they themselves want their future to look like. We also conveyed many messages of solidarity from our UK parliamentary colleagues, and reiterated the APPG's commitment to supporting international law, and the right of the people of Greenland alone to determine their own constitutional future.

With the assistance of Dr Dwayne Menezes of the Polar Research and Policy Initiative (PRPI), who serves as Secretariat to the APPG, we met with the Speaker of the Parliament Kim Kielsen; Minister of Foreign Affairs and Research Vivian Motzfeldt; Minister for Industry, Mineral Resources, Energy, Justice and Gender Equality Naaja Nathanielsen; senior officials of various ministries; parliamentarians from four of the five political parties and the Foreign and Security Policy Committee; the leadership of the Arctic Council and Inuit Circumpolar Council; and held lengthy meetings with two former Greenlandic Prime Ministers, Aleqa Hammond and Kuupik Kleist. In addition, we met with the UK's Honorary Consul in Nuuk.

In the weeks between Minister Nathanielsen's visit to Westminster and our arrival in Greenland, thanks to some frantic negotiations at the Davos Summit, the immediate threat of US military action to seize Greenland had receded, and a high-level working group consisting of the United States, Greenland and Denmark had been established to find a way of negotiating a path through the current crisis.

Despite the removal of that imminent threat however, the fear that the mercurial President Trump may yet use military force against Greenland persists, among parliamentarians and the general public.

Almost without exception, the message from our meetings was that this crisis is far from over and Greenland's allies in Europe need to remain both vocal and proactive in their support for international law and Greenland's sovereignty.

This report, which has been arranged thematically, gives an accurate account of the numerous discussions we had while in Nuuk, and will, we hope, provide a useful insight for parliamentary colleagues, but also for the UK government, particularly the FCDO and the Department for Business and Trade, in how they could further strengthen the relationship between the UK and Greenland.

Brendan O'Hara MP
Chair
All-Party Parliamentary Group on Greenland



Presenting the new Greenland Tartan to the Speaker of the Inatsisartut Kim Kielsen

The Story of the Greenland Tartan

The presentation of the brand new, officially registered Greenland tartan to both Kim Kielsen, the Speaker of the Inatsisartut, and to Vivian Motzfeldt, Greenland's Foreign Minister, was one of the undoubted highlights of the APPG's visit to Nuuk.

The idea for the tartan came about following a discussion between Margo Page, owner of *Great Scot (Scotland) Ltd.* in Speyside and the chair of the APPG, Brendan O'Hara MP.

Margo and her team, along with many people across Scotland, the UK, and Europe, was outraged at how the Trump administration was bullying a smaller, weaker, and completely defenceless neighbour. Having watched Naaja Nathanielsen's press conference at Westminster, she contacted the APPG and suggested that the creation of a Greenland tartan could be a very visual way of allowing people to show their solidarity with the people of Greenland, as well as a way of expressing defiance in the face of US hostility.

Margo has expertise in this field as it was Great Scot who designed and manufactured the official Ukraine tartan following the invasion by Russia in 2022.

Although there was general agreement that the creation of a tartan would be a wonderful gesture, there were major logistical hurdles to overcome before it could happen.

With the APPG visit to Nuuk imminent, the Greenland tartan would have to be designed, accepted by the government of Greenland, recognised and registered by the Scottish Register of Tartans, manufactured, certified and framed, then delivered to the APPG chair to be taken to Greenland… all in two weeks.

Remarkably and thanks to the perseverance of Margo and the staff of *Great Scot (Scotland) Ltd*, the cooperation of the Registrar, and the agreement of the Greenlandic government, the framed certificates were delivered to Glasgow the night before the delegation left for Nuuk.

The striking new Greenland tartan is made up of the colours of their flag (red and white) and pink, the colour of Greenland's national flower, the Dwarf Fireweed, or *Niviarsiaq* – which translates as "young girl" in the Inuit language. *Niviarsiaq* is celebrated for its vibrant pink-purple blooms that thrive in harsh Arctic conditions.

While we knew that the tartan would be warmly welcomed, we were all struck by the emotional impact the presentation of the tartan had on everyone in the Inatsisartut and beyond.

The knowledge that people across the world were standing in solidarity with the people of Greenland obviously meant so much to them, but to have something so iconic, so visible, as their very own tartan was very, very special.

As one government minister said, it would be amazing to see the Tartan Army wearing the Greenland tartan when they go to the USA for the World Cup in the summer.

The Greenland tartan is now in production, with scarves, blankets, ties, snoods etc likely to be available from Great Scot (Scotland) Ltd very soon. The government of Greenland has already placed their order.


The Scottish Register of Tartans
This is to certify that the following tartan has met the conditions of registration set out in the Scottish Register of Tartans Act, 2008.
Greenland
Registration Number: 15,242
Thread count details
(Half sett, full count at pivots)
Colour Details
R=RED; LR=LIGHT RED; W=WHITE;
On behalf of the Keeper of the Scottish Register of Tartans
3 February 2026
National Records of Scotland
Scottish Government
A Gift from Scotland, to our Friends in Greenland


Attachment preview

What makes Greenland so strategically important?

> "Five hours from Copenhagen and a world away from Westminster, we stepped off an aircraft onto a runway carved out of ice and rock. It was the headlines of the last few months which took us – a cross-party delegation of British parliamentarians representing four political parties – to this vast Arctic island."
>
> (Alicia Kearns MP)

If you look at a globe from above, it is easy to see how Greenland sits at the crossroads between North America, Europe and Asia. By virtue of its geographic location, it lies along the quickest flight paths and the shortest shipping routes between important airports and ports across three continents. Therein lies its strategic importance, signalling as it does both opportunity and vulnerability for the United States and its NATO allies.

The shortest flight path for nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles (and previously bombers) aimed at the US by the Soviet Union and then Russia runs directly over Greenland. This was one of the main reasons why the US invested in early warning systems such as the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line and later the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) that extended to Greenland during the Cold War. It is also why the northernmost installation of the US military, the Pituffik Space Base (formerly Thule Air Base) in Greenland, remains so central to the more recent Upgraded Early Warning Radar (UEWR) system.

Furthermore, with the Arctic warming nearly four times faster than the global average, sea routes opening up across the top of the world – once seen as almost impenetrable frozen frontiers – are becoming navigable waterways between continents. Maritime traffic along these trading routes is expected to increase. Not only are they shorter and faster but also, given the security and climate-related risks associated with the more established routes via the Suez and Panama Canals, seemingly safer. China and Russia are understandably seeking to capitalise on this opportunity to secure economic and security advantages.

For the US and the UK, this could very well represent a dual threat to our security. Both Russia and China have long been invested in the Arctic, with Russia having a substantially larger icebreaker fleet, including the world's only fleet of nuclear icebreakers. Although there are no Russian or Chinese ships in Greenlandic waters, Greenland's strategic location on the eastern end of the Northwest Passage and as the northwestern anchor of the Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap – through which Russian and Chinese vessels and submarines must pass to enter the North Atlantic from the north – does make it valuable to space, aerial and maritime surveillance.

Beyond the waterways that global economies will all seek to benefit from, there's also Greenland's resource riches, most notably critical minerals. Greenland holds significant reserves of rare earth elements and other strategic resources. These are the minerals that power our defence and security, our technology and our everyday lives: from advanced weapons systems and aircraft to electric cars and wind turbines, and even our televisions, phones and computers. At present, China dominates the processing and supply chains of rare earths, but in Greenland, we have a partner who could, in decades to come, help break that stranglehold reshaping the balance of economic power globally.

Greenland also possesses some of the world's richest fishing grounds and is one of our most important sources of fish and fish products in the UK. Much of the cold-water prawns and a significant portion of the cod and haddock, as well as a host of other seafood, we consume in the UK comes from Greenland. In addition, Greenland, like the UK, has the potential to be an energy powerhouse: it sits on significant oil and gas reserves but has banned new oil and gas exploration, choosing instead to prioritise clean energy starting with its massive and largely untapped hydropower potential. It plans to explore the production of green hydrogen and ammonia as well.

As the ice melts and the permafrost thaws, the rich resources of the Arctic are becoming more accessible, which again translates as global powers taking greater interest in the region. Greenland will no longer be a distant outpost but the apex of new commercial and military realities – and central to national and international security. American planners are acutely aware that the nearest Russian air base sits within missile range of American interests. They also recognise that Russian and Chinese vessels plying the Northern Sea Route will pass through the Norwegian and North Seas or the GIUK Gap (Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap) before calling at Western European ports or sailing to North America.

For decades, the Arctic has been an arena of comparatively low tension, governed more by stewardship and cooperation than rivalry. Yet that era is receding. Competition is not a future prospect; it is already under way and will intensify. Greenland sits at the crossroads in the emerging Arctic century. You will hear far more about Greenland in the next 20 years than you have in the last 20. That is not by accident. It is geography and geopolitics. It is in this context that Greenland found itself crashed onto front pages around the world a few months ago.

In strict legal and operational terms, much of what President Trump says that he desires is already available to the US. The 1951 Defence of Greenland Agreement between the Kingdom of Denmark and the US already provides the US with extensive – virtually unlimited – access to Greenland for military purposes. Greenland and Denmark have conveyed they are open to the US expanding its military presence in Greenland. Greenland is also open to commercial partnerships on critical minerals and beyond. The leadership of Greenland has repeatedly said that while Greenland is not for sale, it is open for business and would welcome investment.

However, it would be naïve to assume that President Trump is simply seeking access alone. Clearly, he seeks a personal triumph he can frame as historic. An opportunity for a real estate mogul to define his legacy by leaving a very personal mark on history. Recognising that reality is essential to understanding how Greenland should approach the moment. The Trump presidency is searching for defining achievements, a strategic win worthy of a leader approaching his 80th birthday and presiding over the 250th anniversary of American independence. Greenland, in that calculus, offers symbolism, scale and spectacle.

The idea that the US should buy Greenland – whether to secure access to its resources, or to protect or advance defence and security interests – isn't new. Since it was first raised by US Secretary of State William Henry Seward in 1867, the idea has resurfaced in 1910, 1946, 1955 and, more recently, under Trump in 2019 and since 2025. Although the US had declared its recognition of Danish sovereignty over Greenland in 1916 as a condition to acquiring the Danish West Indies (which would become the US Virgin Islands), US interest in Greenland had not diminished – and would only grow during the Second World War and the Cold War. Trump, however, is the first to go as far as implying a threat of military action.

Kalaallit Nunaat: Not a Frontier, but a Home

> "The trip to Greenland gave us a powerful insight into how the people of Greenland value their way of life and culture. It was especially heartening to see how they're determined to strengthen Kalaallisut as a written and spoken community language. Their robustness in the face of historic colonial oppression and present-day political threats deserves our support."
>
> (Liz Saville Roberts MP)

Greenland today is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark – with near-complete autonomy over its internal affairs, including fisheries and mineral resources, while certain fields of responsibility, such as foreign, defence and security policy, remain with Denmark. Denmark provides an annual block grant of roughly DKK 4.3 billion (approximately GBP 500 million or USD 650 million) which accounts for roughly 20 per cent of Greenland's GDP and around half of its public budget today.

During our time in Nuuk, we learnt about Greenland's path to self-government, with the three most important milestones being:

- 1953: Greenland ceased to be a colony of Denmark and was fully integrated into the Kingdom of Denmark as a county or district.
- 1979: Greenland secured Home Rule and thus became an autonomous constituent country within the Kingdom (with its own parliament and government).
- 2009: Greenland secured Self-Government, with the Self-Government Act recognising Greenlanders as a distinct people under international law with the right of self-determination, establishing Greenlandic as the official language, enabling a takeover of several areas of responsibility, and defining a pathway with respect to Greenland's access to independence.

Beyond its headline-grabbing geopolitical importance and resource wealth, what struck us the most about Greenland was its people. Greenland may be the world's largest island (that is not a continent) and its least densely populated territory. And global powers and the international media might portray Greenland mainly as a resource-rich frozen frontier. But to its 56,500 people, it is much more than that: it is their ancient, resilient, vibrant and much-loved home.

Even its name in Greenlandic or Kalaallisut is *Kalaallit Nunaat*, which translates as 'Land of the Kalaalliit', signifying that it is the land of the people – the Greenlandic Inuit. Today, the Greenlandic Inuit make up nearly 90 per cent of Greenland's population, with many having mixed Inuit and Danish (or other Northern European) heritage. The rest of the population is largely of European descent, mainly Danes. There is also a small but growing population of Asian descent – from countries such as Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka and China.

The people of Greenland today have been shaped by and have shaped the landscapes they inhabited and with which they interacted.

- The vast majority of the island – 81 per cent – is covered by ice, with the Greenland Ice Sheet dominating the vast interior.
- The population of roughly 56,500 lives in around 70 towns and settlements scattered along the coastline.

- 65 per cent of the population lived in the five largest towns - Nuuk, Sisimiut, Ilulissat, Aasiaat and Qaqortoq.
- During our visit to Nuuk, we did not see a single tree. The only natural forest, we learnt, is in South Greenland where efforts have also been made to plant trees.

It was also of interest that there are no roads linking towns and settlements in Greenland.

- If you want to visit another town, you fly or sail.
- We met a young man whose parents had undertaken a 12-hour round trip that day simply to fish for cod.
- The Speaker of the Greenlandic Parliament spoke with us and then boarded his small boat to sail himself home, a seven-hour boat journey to his family. That is daily life here: endurance, resilience and self-reliance.
- One major infrastructure project – Arctic Circle Road – involves the phased development of the first inter-settlement road in Greenland, connecting Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut.

It is this geographic reality which shapes the Greenlandic people: they have a deep relationship with their land, as the only way to survive is to be in partnership with the ice, mountains and sea.

When it comes to their livelihoods, we learnt that more than 40 per cent of all jobs were in the public sector, often for the municipalities or for the Government of Greenland.

- More than 60 per cent of employed women work in the public sector.
- The public sector was also among the most popular choices for employed men alongside fisheries and fisheries-related industry.

Outside the public sector, fisheries, hunting and agriculture (but mainly fisheries) accounted for the most employment, representing more than 15 per cent of total employment in 2025.

- If one excluded the public sector, then fisheries, hunting and agriculture accounted for nearly 28 per cent of employed persons in average per month.

Likewise, when it comes to turnover, fisheries and related industry accounted for around a third of the turnover created by companies.

- Fishing is and will remain highly significant to the economy of Greenland.
- Even the opposition to the EU/EEC sprang from issues arising over fisheries.
- Sector dominated by state-owned Royal Greenland and privately owned Polar Seafood.
- Around half the catch is processed in trading posts along the coast; the rest is processed on board or sent to Denmark or Germany for processing, value addition and export.

Like fishing, hunting is foundational to local culture, identity and food security.

- Three-quarters of Greenlanders supposedly hunt for at least some of their food, with hunting seen as a way to compensate for a lack of formal economic activity. (Arctic Today)
- A noteworthy feature of employment in Greenland is its seasonal variation, with people taking up one job one season and another job in another. For instance, those licensed to hunt professionally do not make their sole livelihood from hunting and may engage in dinghy fishing in summer and ice fishing in winter. (Greenland in Figures 2025)
- For low-income families, hunting serves as an important means of subsistence: it provides food, alleviates poverty, and by replacing cash, it prevents economic drains caused by gambling or substance abuse. (Arctic Today)
- The most important marine mammal species for hunts are seals and whales, and the most important land species for hunts are musk ox and reindeer.

The other major industry – outside fisheries – is wholesale and retail trade, accounting for 10 per cent of overall employment and nearly a third of the turnover generated by companies.

Other key industries when it came to employment were transportation and business activities, followed by hotels and restaurants, electricity and water supply, manufacturing, and mining and quarrying. Future economic sectors being explored are tourism and hospitality, export of ice and water, the export of sand, the production and export of surplus energy as well as green hydrogen and ammonia, and data centres. There is also a growing sheep farming industry in South Greenland that entails meat production, wool production and agro-tourism.

When it comes to the mining sector, we learnt about the resource wealth of Greenland, especially when it comes to critical minerals such as rare earth elements, and about the many British, Canadian and Australian firms that already hold licences in Greenland.

- Greenland has high environmental standards in mining, and there is a ban on uranium extraction, as there is on new oil and gas exploration, despite there being massive deposits.
- There is a fear that if the USA gets to "own and control" Greenland, then all the high environmental standards and the strict labour laws will be diminished as US companies drill and mine for everything they can access.
- One Greenlandic policymaker noted that while critical minerals may be needed to break China's dominance, the well-ordered extraction of minerals requires stability. China thinks decades ahead, whereas the present US administration is short-termist and appreciates little of this. There is a need to de-risk mineral projects: mapping needs to be done to find hitherto unknown mineral deposits.
- Although there may be low unemployment in Greenland, the Mining Minister noted, the workforce is small and low-skilled. "There needs to be more training in mineral extraction and related matters."

What especially struck us when we visited shops, supermarkets and restaurants was the high costs of even basic goods, such as clothes, which translated as high costs of living.

- Understandably, remoteness had a major part to play: we learnt about the logistical difficulties of keeping towns and settlements across Greenland supplied and connected.
- Royal Arctic Line, 100% owned by the Government of Greenland, has a government-backed monopoly over transport to, from and between towns and settlements across Greenland and the rest of the world, and it also operates the 13 largest ports and harbours.
- Breaking the monopoly may lower the costs of shipping to some areas but is risky because the monopoly entails a duty to supply towns and settlements across Greenland, even along routes to remote and sparsely populated settlements that might never be profitable.
- The downside of the monopoly is that costs of shipping in Greenland are prohibitively high as the rates have to absorb the costs of unprofitable or less profitable activity.
- The upside is that cross-subsidisation allows for busier routes to help offset the costs of less busy ones, keeping Greenland connected and supplied.
- Christian Keldsen, the CEO of Greenland Business Association and the UK's Honorary Consul, said that we could think of Greenland as Denmark's Falklands, but much larger.

State-owned enterprises with government-backed monopolies are not unusual in Greenland.

- The 'Big Five' owned by Government of Greenland included Royal Greenland in fisheries; KNI in retail, fuel supplies and logistics; Air Greenland, the national airline; Royal Arctic Line, in cargo and sea freight; and Tusass, in telecommunications and postal services.
- Other key state-owned companies included Nukissiorfiit, the national utility company; INI in housing; Illuut in real estate; Arctic Umiaq Line in ferries; Great Greenland in tanning

and clothing; NunaGreen in construction and renewable energy; Nalik Ventures in investment; and Visit Greenland in tourism.

- Electricity, water, telecommunications and postage bills are levied generally equal rates, regardless of remoteness and often made possible by cross-subsidisation.

Another point that struck us is the shortage of manpower:

- Even if existing businesses or new businesses – or large infrastructure projects – were to create new jobs, it was difficult to fill all the new roles with local labour.
- As the FT reported, while there were only 270 Filipino and 200 Thai immigrants living in Greenland five years ago, there were now around 1,100 Filipino and 400 Thai immigrants, with Asian migrant labour propping up the Greenlandic economy.
- We also learnt that there were Chinese nationals who originally came to Greenland to work in fish processing factories but stayed on.

Minister Naaja Nathanielsen was quick to point out that there was a big opportunity here.

- Might there be potential to work across Inuit communities in Canada and Alaska where there is a surplus of young people, but sometimes few employment opportunities, to increase workforce capacity in Greenland? Can Greenland extend employment opportunities across the Inuit world? It helps that Kalaallisut and the languages of the Canadian Inuit are close to being mutually comprehensible.
- The challenge is that the idea could be stymied by US, Canadian and Danish government regulations, as Greenland is in the Schengen area, whereas the US and Canada are not, and one would have to look closely at how Inuit cross-border mobility can be made possible.





Left: Meeting the Minister for Industry, Mineral Resources, Energy, Law Enforcement and Gender Equality, Naaja Nathanielsen

Right: Meeting the CEO of Greenland Business Association and the UK's Honorary Consul, Christian Keldsen

Greenlandic Responses to Trump's Threats

> "A year ago, Trump's statements felt like a joke, but then they began to feel very real, very serious. Across Nuuk, we heard stories of families with bags packed by the doors, children terrified of imminent invasion, and the elder generation fearful of losing what self-rule they had gradually won over the last 50 years."
>
> (Alicia Kearns MP)

The aggressive rhetoric directed at Greenland, emanating from a foreign power, have made many Greenlanders feel uncomfortable, intimated and harassed in their own homes. What seems to have surprised so many is that the threat they sense comes not from China or Russia as they had been warned to expect but from their most trusted ally, the US, with whom Greenland has cooperated closely for more than 80 years.

Exhausted with being in the eye of the geopolitical storm, or simply in the pursuit of a sense of stability and normalcy, some families have already left Greenland for Denmark or have considered doing so. Around 17,000 Greenlanders live in Denmark, and many are reported as being too scared to return since the start of the current crisis.

Younger people are often quicker to feel the threat of Trump's statements. Many speak English, and they turn to YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms for news and wider views. Katuaq Cultural Centre of Greenland in Nuuk has an exhibition featuring art by school children that captures the fear, frustration and fatigue they feel – and also their resilience and defiance.

Kim Kielsen, former Prime Minister of Greenland and currently Speaker of the Inatsisartut, said to us, "Most people in Greenland felt great pain when Trump said what he did." It was clear that the disappointment was all the more palpable as it felt like disrespect and betrayal by a close and trusted friend that Greenland had steadfastly privileged and prioritised.

"Our country is not for sale. We are not a commodity.", he said to us, echoing the position adopted by many in the Government of Greenland, including the Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen. Even when it came to the relationship between Greenland and Denmark, Kielsen stated, "Greenland and Denmark will agree between ourselves what our future will be. We will not let the USA meddle."

Greenland's Energy and Mining Minister Naaja Nathanielsen observed, "There has been lots of anger among the people of Greenland over Trump's stance." What had started off as worry is transcending into anger. "The USA is not a good friend, but it is an ally", she added, reassuring us that the Government of Greenland still sees the US as an ally even if the US was no longer acting as a good friend.

It is apparent that the government is doing what it can to paint a more complex picture of the situation for its domestic audience, graciously reminding them that there are competing views and narratives in the US, and that not all Americans share Trump's desire to own Greenland. Nathanielsen clarified that no matter what the differences might be with the US administration, Greenland was very much open to American tourists and businesses.

A Greenlandic MP, who serves on the Foreign and Security Policy Committee, went a step further to say that the fundamental problem arises because Trump's frame of reference as an American real estate dealmaker prevents him from grasping how different a place Greenland is. "Trump does not understand the relationship between the people of this island and the land. People do not own land here; it is all owned collectively."

As we were visiting Greenland just a little over three weeks after Naaja Nathanielsen's visit to Westminster, we asked if there had been an update since her last address to us. Nathanielsen believes that the ICE crisis in Minnesota in late January took Trump's attention away from Greenland, although she believes that "control and ownership" is still Trump's ultimate ambition when it comes to Greenland.

In the week after we left, Trump posted on Truth Social that he was working with the Governor of Louisiana Jeff Landry to send a "great hospital boat" to Greenland to look after the many who were sick but not being taken care of there. The offer of assistance was not made in response to a request by the Government of Greenland, which politely turned down the offer, but again indicates how Greenland is never far from Trump's mind.

While Iran may have captured the Trump Administration's focus for the time-being, the general sentiment in Greenland remains the same: that it would be unwise to assume that Trump has moved on from Greenland permanently. A recent tweet on X by Trump's Presidential Envoy for Special Missions Richard Grenell stating that the US clearly needs Greenland for national security purposes because NATO members weren't all with the US on Iran should serve as a case in point.



Left: One of the many posters by schoolchildren exhibited at Katuaq Cultural Centre in Nuuk

Right: Our delegation with a 'Greenland is not for sale' poster placed outside a local shop

Greenlandic Perspectives on Relations with Denmark

> "What is striking about the relationship between Greenland and Denmark, in a political context, is the consensus across political parties that Greenlanders seek self-government and be independent of Denmark. The political debate is far more about *when* rather than *if*. However, recent threats from the US President Trump have seen Greenland working more closely, and I perceive more on an equal footing, with Denmark in defence of Greenland's sovereignty. There is no getting away from some heinous history between Denmark and Greenland, particularly acutely felt by women and girls in light of control of women's bodies. It was striking that given how recently those wrongs were committed, how difficult it must be for some to see Denmark as an ally."
>
> (Cat Smith MP)

The global focus on Greenland has cast the spotlight also on Greenland's past and present relations with Denmark. Not too long ago, the parties in Greenland seemed to be coalescing around the pursuit of independence. Now, while independence remains on the horizon as a goal, most parties have united around a similar position that – in the face of Trump's threats – it might be better to stay in the Kingdom of Denmark for the time-being. Beyond the responses of Greenlanders to Trump's rhetoric, we were keen to hear local perspectives – from policymakers to the general public – about Greenland's complex and evolving relationship with Denmark.

From government officials, we learnt that the Kingdom of Denmark is a unified realm composed of three equal parts: Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. While Greenland remains an autonomous territory within the Kingdom, it now holds equal status as a constituent country rather than subordinate colony. We learnt about its path to self-government, from ceasing to be a colony and becoming fully integrated as a county or district of Denmark in 1953, to securing Home Rule and becoming an autonomous constituent country (with its own parliament and government) in 1979, to securing Self-Government, which significantly expanded its autonomy, in 2009.

We learnt also that the Self-Government Act recognised Greenlanders as a distinct people under international law with the right of self-determination, established Greenlandic as the official language, and defined a pathway for Greenland's access to independence. Greenland today enjoys nearly complete autonomy over its internal affairs, while Denmark retains authority over certain areas, such as foreign, defence, security and monetary policy. The annual block grant of roughly DKK 4.3 billion (approximately GBP 500 million or USD 650 million) provided by Denmark accounts for roughly 20 per cent of Greenland's GDP and around half of its public budget today.

In our meetings with the various political parties in Greenland, it became clear to us that while almost all were in favour of Greenland becoming independent, the question of when it should do so – the speed or timeframe – was the major point of contention. For some, Greenland should pursue independence first and then sort out issues such as education and economic development, or pursue them through international cooperation along the way. For others, Greenland should first sort out the issues with its education, healthcare and economic development, and then, at the right time, seek independence. The question of economic development was key, as if Greenland were to become independent, the block grants from Denmark would cease.

Trump's threats appear to have induced several parties – even historically the more pro-independence ones – to adjust their postures and coalesce around a similar position that it might be more prudent to stay within the Kingdom of Denmark for now. Some people see Trump's threat as being real, and some older people in particular have been frightened off the idea of full independence. But people still believe that Greenland and the idea of independence will prevail.

On the future of Greenland, the Speaker of the Inatsisartut, Kim Kielsen, whose party Siumut joined forces with three other parties – Demokraatit, IA and Atassut – in the coalition government, said, "Greenland is on the path towards sovereignty, but the people have to be realistic. Education is critical. Only around 12-13% of the population have a university (higher) degree. The vast majority have only a high school diploma. Likewise, building economic resilience is key. 90-95% of Greenland's total export value is from fisheries, therefore they have to diversify the economy. But the heartfelt wish of the people of Greenland is to one day be independent."

Almost all the MPs we met identified education as a huge problem for Greenland's ability to become independent. They were concerned about a brain-drain of people going to finish their studies in Denmark and not returning home afterwards. There is also evidence that, increasingly, Greenlandic Danes are leaving for Denmark. One official said that independence is not going to be that easy: if it were to be pursued, there will have to be a solution with regard to the annual block grant from Denmark which accounts for roughly 20 per cent of Greenland's GDP and around half of its public budget.

Pele Broberg, an MP from the more assertively pro-independence party Naleraq that did not join the coalition and which remains the only party in opposition, believes that the coalition government has used the crisis to row back on a commitment to independence. He repeatedly referenced the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples).

He complained that Greenland was faced with two difficult partners: Denmark was not innocent, with Danish media more critical of the determinedly pro-independence parties, while the US raised the sceptre of annexation, with the right wing using such aggressive rhetoric to create fear and make people afraid of the US with little concern for what it would do to the long-term bilateral relationship.

He noted that there were various options to consider for Greenland's future with respect to Denmark and the US: i) union, ii) free association and iii) independence. The MP said free association with Denmark would be more preferable than free association with the US, but that doesn't preclude some sort of defence union with the US or international cooperation with others. When asked to expand on the concept of free association, the MP explained, "what we have today, plus defence, foreign policy and trade. Also, reparations."

On the subject of reparations, Broberg referred to the documentary 'The White Gold of Greenland', which detailed how Denmark extracted and exported cryolite – a mineral crucial for aluminium production – from Ivittuut, generating at least DKK 400 billion (GBP 49 billion) between 1854 and 1987, with little benefit for the local Greenlandic economy. The controversial film, which has since been "depublished" by the Danish public service broadcaster DR, challenges the narrative of Denmark generally being 'the good coloniser' and Greenland being the 'eternal financial burden' by portraying Denmark's actions through the lens of self-interest. It has also provided a shot in the arm to discussions around reparations.

The MP also referred to the Greenlandic economy at present as being dominated by Greenlandic companies that serve as 'as cover' for Danish companies engaged in extractive activity. Furthermore, 40 per cent of the employment in the public sector, he said, was funded mainly by Denmark. Even in the fisheries industry which accounts for the majority of jobs in the private sector, he observed that a large part of the added value goes to the Danish market.

Beyond the grievances with the US, we heard several accounts from some MPs and the public about how shamefully the Indigenous people of Greenland had been treated by Denmark not too long ago. It seemed to us that by turning the spotlight from Greenland's relationship with Denmark to Greenland's relationship with the US, Trump had inadvertently and perhaps unknowingly given Denmark a gift: the time and opportunity to make amends.

We learnt that roughly half of all women and girls, some as young as 12, had IUDs inserted without their consent when the Danish Government decided it would "control" Greenland's population. Women were not told what was being fitted, or why: we met one young man who shared with us that his mother was one of the women forced to have an IUD inserted with no idea what it was.

Inuit children were separated from their families and sent to Denmark for social experiments, adopted or to be put in boarding schools away from their families and divorced from their culture. Settlements were emptied.

Then there are the so-called "legally fatherless" children, where if a mother was Greenlandic and the father Danish, he was not recorded on the birth certificate.

These injustices are not relics of the 18th century. Some occurred as recently as 1975.

On one of the days, we sailed up Nuup Kangerlua, the second largest fjord system in Greenland, to see the effects of climate change, but what really caught our attention was the abandoned fishing village of Qoornok that now seemed partially inhabited.

The permanent population was effectively forced to leave the village by the Danish government in 1971-1972 when the fish processing factory closed. There was a general policy at the time, which began in the 1950s, to encourage people to move from smaller coastal communities in Greenland (deemed unprofitable and unhealthy) into Nuuk with a view to consolidate the workforce and because it would be easier and cheaper to provide services at a central location.

Such relocation, however, often resulted in loss of identity and intergenerational trauma, with people who may have been the most skilled hunters or fishers in a coastal settlement now scrambling to find a place and a role for themselves in a more populous urban environment where they did not feel at home.

Meanwhile, in Nuuk, so as to accommodate the people coming in from the abandoned coastal communities, Denmark built large residential buildings, the largest and most infamous of which was Blok P. These large apartment blocks proved entirely unsuitable to the lifestyles of the incoming residents, contributed to their experience of displacement and loss, and was dismantled in the 2010s.

The trauma of relocation has been deemed to be a major contributor to the high rates of depression, substance abuse and suicide in Greenland today.

It is easy to feel visceral anger at these crimes committed against Greenlanders, and yet the Greenlandic people are not defined by grievance. They are passionate about their future, protecting their culture and people, and increasingly determined to chart a path in their ambition of independence. That aspiration is not reckless or immediate, it is rooted in a desire to achieve full self-governance sustainably, when the people, economy and institutions are ready.





The fishing village of Qoornoq effectively abandoned by 1972 as part of a Danish government modernisation program aimed at moving residents of smaller coastal settlements to larger centres

Greenlandic Perspectives on Arctic Security

> "Greenland finds itself at the centre of global politics and a key player in global security conversations, both due to its strategic location and presences of rare earth minerals. It's important in this context, not to also lose sight of its extreme vulnerability to climate change and the melting ice."
>
> (Cat Smith MP)

As much of the recent hullaballoo relates to the centrality of Greenland to 'national and international security' as envisaged by the US, we were equally interested in shifting gears and listening to perspectives on Arctic security as envisaged by the people in Greenland.

For many Greenlanders, the concept of Arctic security goes beyond just state-centred military security. They frame it more holistically as including human/social, environmental/climactic, economic and political dimensions that, furthermore, they see as often being interrelated.

On the environmental dimension, the greatest threat to security is climate change and its impacts on communities and livelihoods.

- The Speaker of the Inatsisartut, Kim Kielsen, who is from Paamiut, noted that we cannot discuss Arctic security without mentioning climate change, the impacts of which were felt in Greenland so prominently. "We grew up looking at the impact of climate change. We have to be able to talk about climate change.", he asserted.
- An MP on the Foreign and Security Policy Committee, Justus Hansen, who is from East Greenland and represents the party Demokraatit, said, "Security for Greenland isn't about guns and bombs. The greatest security threat is climate change and its devastating effects, like the massive tsunami which occurred in a fjord in East Greenland, and which ran up and down the fjord for nine days. Thankfully the area was uninhabited." He referred to the massive landslides in northeastern Greenland in September 2023 that led to mega-tsunamis that became trapped standing waves that ran back and forth Dickson Fjord and "shook the Earth" (as the BBC reported) for nine days, with tremors detected worldwide.
- Sara Olsvig, Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, and Camilla Aviaja Olsen, Chair of the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), pointed to the impacts of climate change on Arctic communities, including climate-related threats to food security, health, housing and infrastructure. They referenced the climate-induced forced relocation of Alaska Native communities in villages such as Newtok, Kivalina and Shishmaref in Alaska to illustrate the severity of the threats.

On the human/social dimension, the threat might be the social challenges the people of Greenland encounter: higher rates of depression, suicide and substance abuse, as well as higher incidence of disease (such as tuberculosis and diabetes) and lower life expectancy than their peers in Denmark.

- Sara Olsvig and Camilla Aviaja Olsen highlighted the challenges relating to mental health and suicide, especially among Indigenous people. These issues have often been attributed to factors such as climate (such as seasonal affective disorder arising due to prolonged winter darkness) and geography (such as remoteness) that characterised large swathes of Greenland and the wider Arctic. However, they pointed out, the loss of identity is a key and recurring theme among young Inuit people, and is believed to be responsible for the rise in suicide.

- Climate change, with the loss of ice and its implications for fisheries and thus livelihoods, was one factor contributing to a loss of identity. Olsvig and Olsen also referenced how climate-induced displacement was already affecting communities in the Arctic.
- Neglect or mistreatment by the colonial state apparatus was another factor: the issues with involuntary contraception and sterilisation; legally-fatherless children; separation of children from their families to be sent to Denmark for foster care and re-education; and relocation of communities under various modernisation programmes also contributed to the loss of identity, long-term and intergenerational trauma, and mental health challenges.
- The uneven and unequal access to healthcare, and other systemic inequalities, across Greenland and between Greenland and Denmark were also an important factor.

On the economic dimension, the threat to security might arise from the challenges faced in achieving sustainable economic development in the Arctic region and the vulnerabilities of Arctic economies to external shocks, whether relating to climate or geopolitics.

- The discourse about development in the Arctic is heavily polarised between those who seemingly want development at all costs and those who seemingly do not want any development at all, with both postures failing to adequately consider the needs, concerns and aspirations of the people of the Arctic and thus proving more harmful than helpful. Finding a way forward to achieve sustainable economic development was a priority.
- One official also referred to how differently the Arctic was prioritised across the region when it came to economic development. On the one hand, while countries in the West with Arctic territory were wealthy, with strong economies, the Arctic often constituted a long-neglected backyard. On the other hand, while only 1.5 per cent of Russians live in the Arctic, Russia gets 20 per cent of its GDP from the Arctic. The asymmetries and disparities of economic development across the Arctic had consequences on Arctic security.
- Furthermore, it was not uncommon for Arctic economies to face several difficulties, whether in relation to operating in extreme and harsh environments, accessing capital, attracting and retaining skilled labour, keeping costs down to stay competitive, or adapting to climate change and evolving geopolitical realities. These difficulties also had implications on Arctic security, as beyond affecting people's livelihoods, it risked making the region more vulnerable to potentially nefarious foreign influence and activity from actors seeking to exploit the gaps.
- Like many small economies, the economy of Greenland experienced vulnerability because – aside from the annual block grant from Denmark – it was overdependent on a single dominant resource (in this case, fisheries). This made it more vulnerable to external shocks and more dependent on public funds from Denmark. This is why Greenland has prioritised building greater economic resilience through economic diversification.
- The shocks are varied. Climate change is causing species such as cod and halibut to move further north to find colder water, and this is taking a toll on Greenland's economy and society. A changing geopolitical environment, such as China and the US waging a trade war, or Russia invading Ukraine and being subject to sanctions, also has significant implications for Greenland's international trade (such as fish exports) and thus economy.
- For instance, after the UK left the EU's Single Market, fish exports from Greenland that had hitherto entered the UK on a tariff-free and quota-free basis now faced the prospect of high tariffs, rendering the products more expensive and less competitive, adversely affecting bilateral trade. With the UK being one of Greenland's largest export markets for fish and fish products, fishing communities in Greenland that were heavily reliant on UK-Greenland trade were disproportionately affected.

On the political dimension, the threats to Arctic security envisaged by many Greenlanders relate to how susceptible the region has become to changes in the wider geopolitical environment. A few years ago, it was almost unthinkable that the Arctic would be compelled to move on so quickly from its 'High North, Low Tension' consensus. Now, rather than being an exceptional zone for cooperation, less affected by tensions elsewhere, the Arctic has become a geopolitical hotspot, with global powers vying for influence and control, and sidelining the concerns and aspirations of the people of the region.

- Tensions elsewhere (such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or the US-China trade war) now especially rattle the Arctic. Likewise, the real or perceived interest from foreign powers (whether the US, Russia or China) and the undermining of the rules-based international order – including respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the right to self-determination – threaten immediate repercussions for the Arctic.
- The Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Sara Olsvig, said that they were determined that the Arctic will remain peaceful; that they would continue to support the rights of Indigenous Peoples – and their right to self-determination; and that Inuit people are not seen and treated as passive spectators in the future of the Arctic.
- Pipaluk Lynge, an MP from Nuuk who represents the party Inuit Ataqatigiit and who serves as the Chair of the Foreign and Security Policy Committee, said that one security issue is Greenland's vulnerability when it comes to vital subsea cables that could be attacked. Attacking critical infrastructure that ensures Greenland has electricity and internet connectivity could prove crippling for a country that relies on such infrastructure to stay functional and connected.
- Several MPs observed that Greenland was extremely vulnerable to interference in its democracy, alluding both to electoral interference and social media manipulation. "Everyone in Greenland uses Facebook, which is immensely popular in Greenland. We know the Trump administration – or those connected to it – are manipulating the Facebook algorithms.", one MP noted, echoing widely held fears and concerns. Another MP agreed about the dangers of misinformation but alleged that it was the Danish media that sought to influence voters during the last election by covering the more pro-independence candidates harshly. The MP complained that "fear of the US has been used against the independence movement. People are scared of the rhetoric being used, and it is being channelled to reduce confidence in independence."
- Many also believe that Trump is terrified of the prospect of an independent Greenland because he fears that Russian and/or China will get a foothold in the country and use it to undermine the US. Pipaluk Lynge observed, "The Trump administration would not give us the option of independence. They are afraid we would look away from the 1951 agreement and NATO, and towards China and Russia." She stressed that while there are no Russian or Chinese ships in Greenlandic waters, she also had no faith in the way that indigenous people have been treated by the US, and that it is essential that the Greenlandic government adopts a very clear pro-NATO, pro-EU, pro-Kingdom of Denmark position.

Thus, what became apparent to us was that many in Greenland embrace a much more wide-ranging understanding of Arctic security, one that encompasses the social, environmental, economic and political dimensions of life in the Arctic. As Greenland, Denmark and the US negotiate through the Joint Working Group to find a way forward, one message from the Foreign and Security Policy Committee was that it is important to understand the different perspectives. Justus Hansen, the Demokraatit MP from East Greenland, remarked astutely, "It is essential when dealing with Trump that hot heads do not prevail. There is a local saying: We have to keep our finger in the snow."



Meeting Greenlandic Parliamentarians on the Foreign and Security Policy Committee



Four British Parliamentarians in Nuuk's oldest district

Progress in Greenland-Denmark-US Negotiations

> "Now we are faced with a geopolitical crisis, and if we have to choose between the United States and Denmark here and now, then we choose Denmark. We choose NATO. We choose the Kingdom of Denmark. We choose the European Union. But one thing everyone must understand. Greenland does not want to be owned by the United States. Greenland does not want to be governed by the United States. Greenland does not want to be part of the United States. We choose the Greenland we know today, which is part of the Kingdom of Denmark."
>
> (Jens-Frederik Nielsen, Prime Minister of Greenland)

Delivered at a joint news conference with Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on 13 January 2026, those words constituted the strongest statement issued by Greenland's Prime Minister to date on the question of Greenland's future relationship with the US and Denmark.

The timing was significant. That very day, Greenland's Mining and Energy Minister Naaja Nathanielsen was at the Palace of Westminster addressing British Parliamentarians and the media at an event convened by the APPG on Greenland.

The next day, Greenland's Foreign Minister Vivian Motzfeldt and Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen travelled to Washington, DC, to meet with US Vice-President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio. While the high-stakes talks ended without a major breakthrough, a high-level working group was established to find a "common way forward".

Exactly a week later, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davis, Trump met with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, whereafter he referenced a possible deal he had reached with him and ruled out both – the use of force to annex Greenland and tariffs on European allies that opposed his stance on Greenland.

While we understand that the US, under Trump, still seeks ownership and control of Greenland, the big question for us during our visit to Nuuk in February 2026 was what progress there had been thus far in the negotiations. We were especially interested in what might have contributed to Trump's about-turn at Davos.

When asked about what Rutte might have offered Trump, and whether he had the mandate to make any such offer, the message from was clear. There was no remit assigned to Rutte to negotiate on behalf of Greenland, and there was no Greenlandic or Danish representative in the room when Rutte spoke to Trump, so Greenlandic ministers and officials do not know what was said.

Referencing the obsequiousness that might seem off-putting to some, one official said that Rutte managed to get Trump to back down because of his ability to appeal to him in a particular way. After all, when dealing with Trump, you are not necessarily dealing on the basis of logic or strategy. Officials from the Government of Greenland reminded us that there has been no written statement from Trump that he has changed his mind.

One official said, "We still do not know what Trump wants. It could be just a place in history. Perhaps it is just personal ambition." They reiterated that they want to talk with the Trump

Administration but that they have red lines: self-determination, international law, and trust/consistency. On the bright side, they added, there is now a platform for dialogue between the three governments, so Greenland has a formal route to discuss matters with the US administration rather than simply try to make sense of posts on social media.

As mentioned earlier, in January 2026, in the aftermath of Trump's threat to Greenland, a high-level working group, consisting of the US, Denmark, and Greenland, was established to address "fundamental disagreements" particularly around US security concerns. There has been one meeting so far, which "went well", and another has been arranged. While there was no timeline set for working group meeting progression, ministers and officials in Greenland were hopeful that talks carried out through this mutually agreed channel would be more productive.

There was some concern that progress being made through this forum could get derailed by posts and announcements on social media around key dates such as Trump's 80th birthday (14th June), 250th anniversary of Declaration of US Independence (4th July) and US mid-term elections (3rd November). Equally, these key dates might offer some indication as to when such posts and announcements might be expected – or even when meetings of the working group might be scheduled. The general sentiment was that the joint working group be given the space and encouragement to operate as the appropriate forum for discussion.

The irony of the current situation is that Trump's aggressive rhetoric, rather than bringing Greenland closer to the US, has resulted in Denmark and Greenland finding themselves in closer alignment, especially on this issue, even if for different reasons. As Energy Minister Naaja Nathanielsen noted, "We are now uniquely aligned with Denmark – they are fighting for their kingdom and us for our autonomy. The best for us is to remain within the kingdom – and keep the potential for self-determination."

Greenland's Foreign Minister Vivian Motzfeldt, whose party Siumut had been long at the forefront of the Greenlandic independence movement, said to us emphatically, "We stand firmly with the Kingdom of Denmark. Any issues between Greenland and Denmark are for Greenland and Denmark." This indicated also how the many of the political parties were coalescing around similar positions in a show of unity.

In our meetings, ministers and officials in Greenland drew attention to the 1951 Defence of Greenland Agreement between the US and the Kingdom of Denmark that already gave the US extensive – virtually unrestricted – access to Greenland for military purposes, allowing them to build and operate bases across the country. We understand that by the end of World War II, there were 17 US military facilities in Greenland – although Pituffik Space Base (formerly Thule Air Base) is the only US base in operation today. The reason for this, they said, had more to do with decisions made internally within the US rather than by Greenland and Denmark.

Even after the 1951 Agreement was modified in 2004 to recognise Greenland's Home Rule Government established in 1979, the amendments related to recognising Greenland as an equal part of the Kingdom of Denmark rather than restricting the US from operating freely in Greenland – as long as it consults with and informs Greenland and Denmark before making any major changes in military operations or structures. Greenland and Denmark have expressed willingness to discuss a further expansion of the agreement if that is where Trump's concerns arise.

Ministers and officials in Greenland also drew attention to the coalition government that had emerged in Greenland after the last election, bringing together four parties out of five, as indicating that that the different parties in Greenland saw sense in standing with each other in this, and the

strength that such a show of unity would provide. At the end of the day, no matter where the different parties stood on the question about the timeline for independence, they were clear they preferred to align with Denmark in the current scenario, work out any differences between Greenland and Denmark internally rather than in the face of external interference, and that less than 5% of the population wanted to be part of the US.

There also appeared to be a recognition that negotiations about Greenland's future relationship with Denmark or the US can only go so far, as major changes agreed would be on shaky constitutional ground if it has neither been debated in parliament nor put to a referendum. There have been four Greenland-specific referendums in recent history: in 1978, to approve the banning or rationing of alcohol; in 1979, to establish Home Rule; in 1982, to leave the European Economic Community (EEC); and in 2008, to adopt Self-Government.

The Government of Greenland is attempting to find the language to convince Trump that Russia and China are not a presence here in Greenland. Ministers and officials stated that the strength of the response from Europe and NATO did make an impression. The main ask of the Foreign Minister Vivian Motzfeldt was that Greenland's allies stand firm on respect for international law, national sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to self-determination.

The Energy Minister Naaja Nathanielsen said that NATO can make a difference by moving quickly to ramp up its physical presence and investment in the Arctic. The Northwest Passage between Canada, the USA and Greenland has to be secured. It is essential that Greenland's allies keep this on the agenda and that means continuing to be vocal in support of Greenland's sovereignty. At the end of the day, "Trump has the ability to climb down trees."

Ministers and officials expressed gratitude to the many allied countries that have now opened consulates in Nuuk. They said it sends a strong signal of solidarity to the people of Greenland. Iceland had opened a consulate in Nuuk in November 2013; the US reopened its consulate in Nuuk in June 2020; the EU opened EU Office in Nuuk in March 2024; while France and Canada established Consulates in Nuuk in February 2026.

Ministers and officials in Greenland encouraged support for the bilateral UK-Greenland Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement and greater UK-Greenland cooperation in education and research, and for these to serve as a stepping stone for the establishment of a British Consulate in Nuuk. The UK approach should be underpinned by a commitment to 'Stability. Peace. Respect.'





Meeting the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Research Vivian Motzfeldt
and presenting the Government of Greenland the new Greenland tartan

The Kingdom of Denmark's Chairship of the Arctic Council

> "We heard about the work of the Arctic Council in bringing together representatives from all nations with Arctic territories. Its role in supporting Indigenous people was evidently of great significance, especially in relation to young people and mental health issues, as was its contribution to regional cooperation through some tough times and addressing issues such as climate change."
>
> (Liz Saville Roberts MP)

If the Kingdom of Denmark has been in the news recently, it isn't simply because of Trump's interest in acquiring Greenland. Equally significant is that it currently chairs the Arctic Council – the principal intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation in the Arctic. The chairship of the Arctic Council rotates between member states every two years. Prior to the Kingdom of Denmark taking over for the period 2025-2027, Norway held the chairship for the years 2023-2025.

As the Kingdom of Denmark comprises three countries, its chairship is being jointly coordinated between Greenland, Denmark and the Faroe Islands, with Greenland taking a special role, leading for the first time in history.

- The Greenlandic diplomat Kenneth Høegh, now the Kingdom of Denmark's Arctic Ambassador, serves as the Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials at the Arctic Council.
- The Chair of the Arctic Council – traditionally always the Foreign Minister in the chairing state – is Vivian Motzfeldt, Greenland's Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- Inuuteq Holm Olsen, Head of Department in Greenland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, serves as acting Senior Arctic Official for Greenland in the Arctic Council chairship team.

During our visit to Nuuk, we had the opportunity to meet with the Kingdom's Arctic Council chairship team and learn more about the chairship agenda and priorities. We also met with Camilla Aviaja Olsen, who serves as Chair of the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG); Daniel Lyberth Hauptmann, the Kingdom of Denmark's Head of Delegation to the SDWG; and Sara Olsvig, the Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council. The visit was timely as the Arctic Council, established in 1996 by the Ottawa Declaration, is marking its 30th anniversary.

The Arctic Council has:

- 8 Members (US, Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia)
- 6 Permanent Participants (Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Saami Council)
- 38 Observers, including
    - 13 Non-Arctic States (UK – since 1998, Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Poland, Japan, China, South Korea, India and Singapore)
    - 13 Intergovernmental and Interparliamentary Organisations
    - 12 Non-Governmental Organisations

Russia had the chairship of the Arctic Council when it invaded Ukraine in 2022.

- Cooperation within the Arctic Council had been temporarily paused in 2022 but has gradually and partially resumed over 2024 and 2025, albeit only at the working group level.

- Chairmanship conferences are now held instead of traditional meetings.

The Kingdom of Denmark's chairship agenda has five priorities:

- Indigenous peoples and communities of the Arctic
- Sustainable economic development and energy transition solutions
- Oceans
- Climate change in the Arctic
- Biodiversity

The Kingdom of Denmark has planned the following upcoming conferences:

- Chairship event on climate change, Arctic Science Summit Week, Aarhus, March 2026
- Oceans Connectivity Conference, UArctic Congress 2026, Tórshavn, May 2026
- Advancing Sustainable Economic Development Workshop, Ilulissat, October 2026
- Arctic Youth Conference, Nuuk, February 2027 – food and mental health on the agenda
- Biodiversity conference, Nuuk, March 2027.

When asked whether the Arctic Council envisioned a security role added on to its mandate, the officials said that it was a consensus-building body, and "one factor for its success is the separation from military security issues". The Arctic Council deliberately stays out of any defence and security matters. This was part of the agreement when it was set up in 1996. On the question of funding, we learnt that Norway is the major funder, even hosting the Secretariat in Tromsø.

The chairship team informed us that while the UK was an Observer, its contribution to the work of the Arctic Council was greatly valued and lauded as setting the gold standard, and they encouraged continued funding for the UK to carry on this work.



Meeting with the Kingdom of Denmark Arctic Council Chairship Team

Where do we go from here?

> "The people of Greenland have said unequivocally that their sovereignty is not for sale. At a time when the rules-based order and adherence to international law is disintegrating, the courage they have shown in defending their right to determine their own constitutional future has been remarkable. And as a totem for freedom and democracy, their fight is also our fight. Greenland has so much potential, and the UK, alongside our European allies, can and must help Greenland achieve its potential in whatever way the people of Greenland choose."
>
> (Brendan O'Hara MP)

The UK, along with its European allies, must stand firmly behind the principle that Greenland is not for sale, nor to be annexed. The Greenlandic people do not wish to be owned by the US. That said, supporting Greenland does not mean hostility to the US. It means offering constructive avenues for cooperation that respect national sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to self-determination, while strengthening collective security. As the UK, our interests in the Arctic are not abstract. The Arctic may feel remote, and Greenland may seem to be a distant land, but we should all sit up and pay attention, because its future will shape ours, and our security demands it. What follows are some of our recommendations.

Set up a UK Consulate in Nuuk

The UK should establish a permanent diplomatic presence in Nuuk:

- The UK cannot be a bystander. Our interests in the Arctic are real and legitimate.
- Given that the Arctic, and Greenland in particular, will continue to be a hugely significant issue in international affairs, the UK should follow the example set by many of our allies and strengthen our diplomatic footprint in Greenland with a UK Consulate in Nuuk.
- Instead, we are seeing 2,000 jobs cut at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office which will only serve to diminish our diplomatic and security capacity.
- The UK Consulate should open as diplomatic support offered to Greenland's negotiations and as a sign of solidarity. It doesn't need an expensive platform.
- The capacity-building support offered to Greenland's negotiations can take the form of the FCDO offering Greenland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs a full-term secondment of an expert in negotiations for the remainder of the Trump Presidency.
- The UK must continue to be active and vocal in support for Greenland's right to determine its own constitutional future, as well as for international law, national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement

The UK should advance a partnership, trade and cooperation agreement with Greenland:

- The UK and Greenland had formally launched free trade agreement negotiations in 2022 to reinstate the tariff-free trade that had ended when the UK left the EU.
- The talks were paused in 2023 but resumed in October 2025 with a view to establishing a bilateral Partnership, Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
- The governments of the UK and Greenland should move quickly to finalise the agreement.

- As the economy of Greenland, like that of many small island states, is disproportionately dependent on a single resource – in this case, fishing – and thus severely affected by trade disruption on this front, the UK should consider replicating as far as possible the conditions prior to its withdrawal from the Single Market, and extending unilateral trade preferences that entail the elimination of tariffs on fish exports from Greenland to the UK.
- The trade negotiations should add in chapters for tourism, education, minerals and energy.

Boost UK-Greenland bilateral cooperation across many areas

The UK should offer support to Greenland in areas where the UK has expertise and experience:

- Sign a critical minerals agreement with Greenland. Through the expertise available at the UK Critical Mineral Intelligence Centre based in Nottingham, it could also assist with mapping and support mineral identification.
- Boost cooperation with Greenland on clean energy; maritime defence, including by assisting with mapping the potential for deep sea docking and submarine partnerships; and science and education, potentially by pairing institutions such as the Department of Earth Sciences, University of Cambridge, with University of Greenland.
- Provide multi-year funding for the UK-Greenland Arctic Research Bursaries Scheme that offered funding for UK-based researchers to collaborate with Greenland-based partners.
- Build greater awareness of UK-Greenland research cooperation supported by the UK Advanced Research + Invention Agency (ARIA)'s £81 million-backed Forecasting Tipping Points programme which aims to enhance our climate change response by developing an early warning system for Greenland and North Atlantic tipping points.

Collective support for Greenland in negotiations

Greenland must not be left to negotiate and deliver a deal alone.

- Greenland must not face Washington without a united Europe and NATO behind it.
- Denmark has a central role to play and indeed must make a substantial contribution, but Arctic security concerns us all.
- European and NATO allies must come together with tangible offers that contribute to Greenland's negotiating bundle, particularly around sub-sea and aerial security in the North Atlantic, so Greenland has maximum capacity.
- While NATO's emerging focus on the High North is welcome, it should be visibly connected to the broader strategic context that Greenland now inhabits.
- The role the UK played in advancing NATO's Arctic Sentry Mission in Greenland and enhancing defence and security cooperation with Norway in the High North is welcome.
- The UK should continue to play a major part in NATO operations in Greenland and the wider Arctic by offering air policing and/or naval deployments.
- The UK or the US should explore potential for deep sea capabilities, including whether Greenland could host submarine docking / recharge stations.

Most importantly, we must not believe for a moment that this crisis has gone away. But we must remind ourselves that Greenland can turn a time of crisis into an opportunity. As we witnessed, Greenland is not without agency. Its 56,500 people are neither passive nor naïve; they are pragmatic and ambitious, with a deep and symbiotic relationship with their island forged through survival in such a vast, brutal and frozen landscape. They can pull through the current storm and come out stronger.

Conclusion

Without doubt, the biggest takeaway from our visit to Nuuk is that Greenland is not for sale, and that their sovereignty is non-negotiable.

It is the settled view of the people of Greenland that one day, Greenland will be independent. And only they will decide when that day is.

Giving up their sovereignty to the United States for a few thousand $USD each is simply not an option for them, as becoming part of the USA will kill any hopes of independence, forever.

It is also a non-starter because Greenlanders do not see themselves as the owners of the land on which they live, and therefore the land is not theirs to sell, to the United States or anyone else.

The only viable route to self-determination for the people of Greenland is remaining inside that voluntary union of the Kingdom of Denmark, where there is a clear and agreed path which can be followed, if and when, the people of Greenland decide to change their constitutional status. This agreed path should be respected by everyone, particularly those who claim to believe in democracy, self-determination and the rule of law.

The people of Greenland have concluded that they do not have a secure, long-term future should they become part of the United States, as it has become increasingly clear that the United States has no interest in Greenland or its people, and sees Greenland purely in strategic terms, in creating a buffer against its enemies and providing a gigantic mine from which it can extract valuable minerals.

Another message we received from our discussions with government ministers, their officials and parliamentarians, was that this crisis has not gone away. The UK and our allies should not be lulled into a false sense of security simply because Greenland is not currently making headlines, and that it has been overtaken by other US-led events in the Middle East.

The people of Greenland believe that the Trump administration's determination to "own and control" is still very much alive. This crisis is not over, and it would be extremely naive of us to believe otherwise. Given that, we strongly advise that the very vocal and practical solidarity that the UK has shown to date must continue.

The UK government should reiterate its support for the right of the people of Greenland to determine their own constitutional future within the agreed framework established with the other members of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Greenland, as part of the Kingdom of Denmark, is currently a NATO ally, and all member states of the alliance should recognise and respect that. We encourage the UK government to play an active role in NATO operations in Greenland and the wider Arctic, recognising that Greenland will become strategically important as the icecap melts and transpolar commercial shipping routes open up.

Given that Greenland will become increasingly important for defence, international trade and as a source of critical minerals, we strongly advise that the UK follow the example set by many of our allies and establish a permanent UK Consulate in Nuuk. While recognising that there are relatively

few UK nationals currently living in Greenland, we should expect this number to grow. Notwithstanding the low numbers of UK nationals in Greenland however, we think it would be extremely remiss of UK not to have a permanent diplomatic presence in what has become one of the most strategically important parts of the world.

It is worth noting that the government of Greenland would very much welcome the establishing of a permanent UK Consulate in Nuuk.

Another area of diplomacy where the UK could possibly assist Greenland is in building capacity within their civil service, particularly around international negotiations. Although Greenland has some incredibly gifted politicians, we believe the FCDO could offer expertise and advice to officials within the government.

The UK and Greenland governments should move quickly to finalise the UK-Greenland Free Trade Agreement. The APPG welcomes the fact that the talks, having paused in 2023 have now resumed and we encourage a quick conclusion to the talks so that a comprehensive trade and cooperation agreement between the UK and Greenland can be put in place. We would also urge that any bilateral agreement explore opportunities that exist in clean energy, tourism, education, fishing, and of course, critical minerals.

The APPG also suggests that the government look at mutually beneficial ways in which UK companies, with years of experience in mapping critical minerals deposits, can assist the Greenlandic government in accessing those currently, and soon to be, extractable reserves.

One of the biggest hurdles restricting Greenland's growth is education. The number of Greenlanders achieving a university level education is alarmingly small. The government in Nuuk is very aware of this problem and would, we are sure welcome assistance in addressing it. It would be useful therefore if the UK government could encourage higher educational establishments across the UK to look at how they could partner with the University of Nuuk, particularly around geology, technology, marine science and polar science.







Meetings with the different political parties in Greenland

