



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

Elections in Greenland—Are the islanders tired of being mere observers?



A political marginal on a global scale has overnight received the first-class attention of some of the most influential players on the world stage.

It was sufficient for Donald Trump to demonstrate his ambition to **incorporate** it into the US during the first few days of his term, making Greenland and all of its associated issues a hot topic in global politics.

Until yesterday, elections for the parliament of Greenland were only of interest to the approximately 57,000 inhabitants. The Tuesday elections will be closely watched on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Greenlanders will elect 31 representatives to the Inatsisartut (parliament). Over the next four years, they will have a perhaps fateful task ahead of them—for example, to begin the process of gaining independence and to decide which alliance they want to belong to—the European Union or perhaps a North American alliance.

Greenland's aspirations for independence and its relationship with Denmark, within which it enjoys extensive autonomy, are the central themes of the forthcoming elections.

Above all, the Greenlanders and their political representatives are under the influence of Trump's expansionist ideas, which they do not favour.

Alarm from Washington

All five parties represented in parliament **rejected** Trump's intentions to make Greenland part of the USA outright. And the population gave a similar, almost unanimous response, as opinion polls conducted immediately after Trump's announcement **showed** that 85% of Greenlanders do not want to join the USA.

"We are in the midst of a serious time. A time we have never experienced in our country," **said** the PM of Greenland, Múte Egede, when he announced in February that the elections

would be held on 11 March.

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Greenland occupied a significant place in the geopolitical shifts that accompanied the start of Trump's new term. Not only this Arctic island, but also Canada and Panama, were on Trump's list of "territorial expansions."

The defensive reflex with which the residents of Greenland flatly rejected the American president's intentions will now have the opportunity to profile into a political position.

Independence Yes, but not immediately

The attitude towards the aspirations of the American president does not seem to matter in the elections, as there is a solid consensus. But the attitude towards the island's independence is a top issue and indirectly a response to the ideas coming from Washington.

Greenlanders have long expressed high and stable support for full independence for their island. Two-thirds of the population **supported** independence five years ago, and recent polls continue to show this support at around 57%.

However, they maintain a stable stance, advocating for a gradual approach to independence. Most supporters of independence want it to happen "sometime in the future," especially if there is reliable evidence that this step will bring economic benefits to the island and its inhabitants.

Only 8% of the population believe that Greenland should become an independent country next year

Since the 2009 law, Greenland has had the right to negotiate independence and hold a referendum. However, the majority would not immediately use this mechanism. According to polls, only 8% of the population believe that Greenland should become an independent country next year, while as many as 52% expect this to be the case in 10 to 20 years' time.

What motivated the Greenlanders to be so cautious were primarily economic calculations, i.e., the assessment of whether it was better to live in an independent state or in the existing autonomous arrangement within Denmark.

Most of Greenland's income comes from fishing, which accounts for more than 90% of exports, but also from subsidies from Denmark, mainly to finance public services. The average **wage** in Greenland is 75% of the average wage in Denmark.

The end of Euroscepticism?

But new circumstances, especially in US politics, are forcing Greenland to think differently. For instance, the high "demand" for its strategic geographic location, particularly its untapped mineral deposits, prompts the question of whether the time has come to decide on more comprehensive intergovernmental arrangements.

The largest island in the world, with an area the size of four Frances or three Texas, is gaining even more strategic security importance due to its location at the northern crossroads of conflicting contacts between the Western allies, China, and Russia.



The elections may boost Greenland's ambitions to become more closely tied to the EU - PM Múte Egede with Ursula Von der Leyen and Danish PM Mette Frederiksen

"Until our country achieves the status of an independent state, our opportunities to officially participate in negotiations will be limited," the spokesperson for the Siumut party, one of the two members of the ruling coalition, told Reuters.

Against this backdrop, the elections may boost Greenland's ambitions to become more closely tied to the EU, given that 60% of the population want to join the bloc.

Greenland's recent political history is strongly Eurosceptic, **recalls** Julian Wood, a PhD researcher at the University of Cambridge. He explains that in 1972, as many as 70% of Greenlanders voted against Denmark joining the then-European Economic Community (the precursor to the EU).

But he also warns that the changed international circumstances could also change the mood of Greenlanders, perhaps as early as Tuesday's elections:

"Historic party preferences are neither dogmatic nor absolute. They bely a flexible pragmatism which—combined with changeable Greenlandic attitudes to Europe—suggests that Brussels and Nuuk [the capital of Greenland] have everything to play for in 2025."