

# GREENLAND: POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

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*Abstract.* This paper treats Greenlandic Home Rule which was founded in 1979. More specifically, this paper addresses (1) the contradiction between Greenlandic development and decolonization, (2) the ideological development in Greenland during the 1960s and how that shaped the political system in place when Home Rule was adopted, and (3) the centrality of the Home Rule authority. In a general sense, it is possible to speak of the Greenlandic Home Rule "state."

## INTRODUCTION

The specific theme of this paper is Greenlandic Home Rule, which was introduced in 1979. In November, 1978, following three years of negotiations by the Danish-Greenlandic Home Rule Commission, the Danish Parliament passed the Home Rule Act and the Law of Mineral Resources in Greenland. Both were recommended by the Home Rule Commission.

The Commission was comprised of seven delegates elected by the members of the Danish Parliament, from among their own number, and seven Greenlandic delegates (the two Greenlandic members of Parliament and five members of the Provincial Council in Greenland). A Danish chairman was appointed by the Minister for Greenland. Before the appointment of this commission an all-Greenlandic Home Rule Committee had submitted a report describing in general terms the Greenlandic viewpoint on future relations with Denmark and the content of a Greenlandic self-government.

In a referendum held on January 17, 1979, 73% of the Greenlandic population<sup>1</sup> accepted

<sup>1</sup>The franchise included Greenlanders as well as Danes living in Greenland. In relation to Home Rule, this demographic unity has been retained. Home Rule is defined in relation to the geographical territory and *not* to any racial definition. One-fifth of the Greenlandic population are Danes, four-fifths are Greenlanders.

the introduction of Home Rule as elaborated by the Home Rule Commission and enacted by Parliament in Copenhagen. What was accepted by the Greenlandic population was a political compromise between primarily Danish viewpoints on the one hand and the wishes of the Greenlandic majority on the other. Finally, at the first election for the newly established Greenlandic national parliament (*Landsting*), the left-wing Siumut Party came into power with an absolute majority of elected representatives and formed the first Greenlandic Government (*Landsstyre*).

Following a dead heat between Siumut and the moderate Atassut Party at the election in 1983, Siumut remained in power by virtue of support from the Marxist Inuit Ataqatigiit Party, which was not represented in the *Landsting* and could tip the balance. Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit had agreed upon the importance of Greenland's withdrawal from the European Economic Community (EEC), a stance supported at a referendum held in Greenland in February, 1982.<sup>2</sup> However, less than one year after the election in 1983, serious disagreements arose between the three political parties concerning the negotiations between the Siumut Government (supported by the Danish Government) and the EEC authorities. The Siumut Government was overthrown, and a new election was held in June, 1984, but

<sup>2</sup>A small majority of 52% voted Greenland out of EEC.

the balance of power remained unchanged and Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit together formed a new government. Finally Greenland withdrew from the EEC January 1, 1985.

The general framework for the following analysis is related to the development of self-government now being promoted all over Greenland and the North American Arctic and Subarctic. This development has, more or less, been enforced by different native groups that are striving for recognition of their land claims and are struggling for some kind of self-determination and self-government. The process and results of this development have been quite dissimilar in Greenland, in Canada, and in Alaska. But the methodology used to analyze and compare them should be the same, and I believe that the approach used here to analyze Home Rule and the process leading to Home Rule in Greenland is applicable to an analysis of land claims in Canada and to evaluating the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA).

With reference to Greenland, I will try to explain the importance of the following three historical and social trends:

- (1) The contradiction between internal social development and decolonization in Greenland;
- (2) The ways in which the dominant political system at the time of Home Rule (1979) evolved from ideological developments that began during the 1960s. With regard to this evolution from ideological formation to political domination, I will often refer to the period just before and just after 1970. These years around 1970 have been referred to previously as the Greenlandic "spring thaw" (Brøsted and Gulløv 1977); and
- (3) The centrality of the Home Rule authority is of considerable importance for its operation, and it is possible to speak of the Greenlandic Home Rule "State."

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was the first attempt in recent times to create new relations between arctic minorities and national governments. Since 1971, the James Bay Agreements, the Nunavut proposal, the Inuvialuit Land Claims Agreement and similar proposals in Canada have followed. These agreements, agreements in principle, acts, or simply projects must be seen as products of different social, economic, and political circumstances conditioning different possibilities for the minorities affected. It is my opinion that the different kinds of self-government proposed for the Arctic must be analyzed in an historical perspective, and that these are a reflection of the balance of power between the native populations and the nation-states.

The future development of Home Rule in Greenland and the future prospects for the Alaskan Natives, for example, are not

determined by the Home Rule Act or the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act respectively. On the contrary, these different kinds of self-government are determined by, and will change in accordance with, changes in the different historical factors that have affected self-determination.

Greenlandic Home Rule, as materialized in the Home Rule laws and the Home Rule administrative and political structure, are of course important factors in the process of decolonization. They will, by their very existence, play an influential role in future social developments in Greenland. However, the Home Rule structure with its new political and administrative institutions is not in itself a causal factor in the social development. On the contrary, Home Rule is a product of specific economic and political factors within Greenland and of external relationships. For that reason, the actual position of the Greenlandic Inuit today must be viewed from the perspective of social processes that emerged inside Greenland after World War II and from the process of decolonization.

Two historical phases are important when analyzing recent developments in Greenland. Before the 1970s, the initiative was in the hands of the Danish state. Economic policy, including the structure of investment, infrastructural development, and related affairs was directed from Copenhagen since all major political changes were products of "decolonization from the top."<sup>3</sup> However, this process of decolonization carried its own immanent contradictions, the most important of which was the growing up of a small, well educated, nationalistic Greenlandic elite.

In the 1970s, this more and more outspoken and critical elite took the political initiative, demanding far-flung economic, social and, very soon, political changes. From then on, decolonization was a defensive means for upholding economic control. Home Rule is to be seen as the final outcome of this second historical phase.

#### DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Following the Second World War, the Danish Government reorganized its policy towards Greenland. The most important ingredients of this new policy were (1) public investments in the infrastructure and in social welfare, and (2) opening up of the country for private (i.e., Danish) investments. Legally, Greenland's colonial status was suspended in 1953, but in practice the colonial policy was

<sup>3</sup>Peter Worsley (1964) has, in a similar situation of decolonization, talked about "democracy from the top."

intensified by virtue of an economic neo-colonialism and the immigration of a considerable number of Danes. From 1950 to 1970, the Danish ethnic group increased from a few percent to roughly one-fifth of the total population. However, around 1960 it was generally accepted that a developmental change was necessary. Private investments had failed to appear, with the exception of those in a few riskless trades such as construction, which is a totally public-financed sector.

TABLE 1. THE POPULATION OF GREENLAND, 1950-1975.

	Greenlanders	Danes <sup>1</sup>	Danes as % of total population
1950	22,581	1061	4.5%
1955	25,234	1867	6.9%
1960	30,378	2762	8.3%
1965	35,132	4483	11.3%
1970	38,912	7620	16.4%
1975	39,979	9523	19.2%

<sup>1</sup>The definition used in official statistics is "persons born outside Greenland."

Source: Ministry for Greenland, Yearbooks.

The situation in Greenland at this time can best be characterized by using the concept of "blocked development."<sup>4</sup> From 1950 onwards, Greenland experienced an economic growth unknown during its more than 200 years of colonial history. There was, however, a growing discrepancy between the economic growth rate and the economic structure on the one hand and the products of this same development on the other: the population growth, the rate of urbanization, the increased level of education, and so on. In the years before 1960, this economic growth was "trapped" by its own inherent consequences; an unchanged developmental policy would only have led to increased unemployment, birth-rate, and social problems. The economy was growing without developing. Something had to be done to establish a balance between the sectors in society.

The solution chosen by the Danish Government was an active intervention with large investments in the *production* sector. Fishing industries were established in the larger towns, newly built state-owned trawlers

<sup>4</sup>The concept "blocking of growth" has been elaborated by Samir Amin (1976).

supplied these units, and the infrastructure received new capital. In order to move people from settlements to towns, state intervention and extra-economic or administrative force were used. Independent hunters and fishermen, in control of their own means of production and to a large extent living on subsistence, were not liable to be drawn from settlements to towns by economic incentives or economic means. Therefore, in order to promote urbanization and proletarianization, settlement schools and KGH shops were closed down, house building was suspended, and loans were only made to fishermen in the towns. Faced with these administrative measures, people moved "voluntarily" from settlements to towns.

As the Greenlandic economy entered the 1970s, it was no longer dominated by small independent hunters and fishermen, but rather was being transformed into an export-oriented fishing economy. By far the greatest part of the export sector was state owned, a fact I consider to be very important in evaluating the possible success of later Home Rule control of the Greenlandic economy. I will return to this point below, and will only emphasize here that by taking over the Royal Greenlandic Trade Department (KGH), Home Rule authorities will acquire a very decisive instrument of control. By January 1, 1985, the fishing industry, the state-owned trawlers, and all export from Greenland had been transferred from KGH to the Home Rule authorities.

An integral part of this state-directed industrialization program was an active urbanization program. In 1950, 45% of the total population lived in the administrative centers called towns. In 1970, more than 70% of the population lived in these towns. The process of urbanization implied proletarianization of hunting and fishing families, with the result that men as well as women lost their roles in the original settlement-oriented occupations. The labor market in the fast growing towns was dominated by Danish workers, of whom the great majority were men. Practically all supervisory positions were occupied by Danes.

Social development in Greenland in the 1950s was characterized by growing economic welfare, improved health conditions (the war against tuberculosis was very effective), a fast-growing birthrate, and, last but not least, growing expectations of economic and social improvements that might follow from the enormous aid from Denmark. These expectations about the future were held especially by well educated, Danish-speaking Greenlanders.<sup>5</sup>

Observers of Greenlandic politics have

<sup>5</sup>For a thorough portrayal of the ethnic relations and the position of the Greenlandic

pointed out that the economic, social, and political oppression of Greenlanders resulted in a growing ethnic consciousness. Among Greenlanders, the well educated and Danish-speaking elite were most aware of this oppression. It was these persons who had been promised equality with the Danes and who, therefore, were acutely aware of what they considered to be broken promises.

This rather small group of people, the Danish-speaking elite, developed into the dominant social group during the 1970s. The concept of an elite is here used as a *social category*, which means a group defined and maintained by political and ideological relations (see Poulantzas 1975). During these years, the Greenlandic elite very much opposed Danes or, more correctly, opposed the Danish-directed political and economic policy. Ethnic identity was a crucial factor in the development and changing role of the elite. In contrast to other Greenlanders, the elite members were well educated, Danish-speaking persons. In fact, all of them were men, as women played only a negligible political role at this time.

The Greenlandic elite was united by non-economic factors and, in fact, participants came from many different economic backgrounds. The concept of an "elite" as a social category is not to place it in contrast to a class determination. But more than any other group, an elite is inclined to change policy and composition owing to fluctuations in social structure and class development. This holds also for the Greenlandic elite. Going back into history, we can trace the roots of the elite from the earliest colonial days. The political importance of this "original" elite was unilaterally determined by the role assigned to it by the colonial power, and its appearance on the political arena has changed in accordance with changing political position. The role and position of the elite continually followed social and economic fluctuations (i.e., the *conjunctural* rather than the *structural* tendency in social and class development).

Usually a consequence of drastic changes (i.e., structural changes) is the disintegration of the elite. In a nonrevolutionary situation, such a process normally takes many years. Such a situation, in fact, became reality in Greenland in the years around 1970 when a very small group detached itself from the rest of the elite. A few years later, this group developed into the left-wing political group, Siumut.

We must note that in a society consisting of only 50,000 individuals inhabiting a coastline several thousand kilometers long, the development of regional social groups tends to be a very slow process. The distribution of the Greenlandic population and the developmental level of the infrastructure are factors to be

elite in the latter part of the 1960s, see H. Kleivan (1969/70) and I. Kleivan (1969/70).

taken into consideration when accounting for the relative success of the Greenlandic elite.

In fact, forming a left-wing section of the elite was in the first instance a matter of organizing a handful of individuals rather than a real social group. Until that time, no other coastwide group or even individuals from the remaining part of the elite had talked about Greenland's future in ideological terms. Thus, the radical section of the Greenlandic elite secured its political position partly because Greenlandic society lacked developed economic groups ("classes") and partly because of a reaction to the relatively small, homogeneous, Danish colonial bourgeoisie.

Mention should be made of this small Danish bourgeoisie, the group that was the dominating social force all through the 1950s and 1960s and the only group at that time similar to a class. The small Danish bourgeoisie was heterogeneous in its composition and included persons employed in leading positions in the KGH and the Greenlandic Technical Organization (GTO). In addition, doctors and other holders of service and cultural/ideological positions were included. Finally, bureaucrats in higher administrative positions, independent master artisans, and similar persons were also part of this class.

The question is what brought this conglomerate together and formed it into a group? First and foremost, all the participants had the same position in the colonial hierarchy and they were all similar, putting the Danish colonial policy into practice. They all went to Greenland "to help the Greenlanders" and "to promote development." They all had the same ideological basis when carrying out the so-called modernization program. Secondly, the small size of Greenlandic social groups forced these economically privileged persons to stick together. They regarded themselves as a group and were so perceived by all Greenlanders.

In the early 1970s, when it was obvious that the Danish implemented development policy ("modernization") had to be changed, the small Danish bourgeoisie lost the initiative to a still more critical elite of young Greenlanders. The heterogeneous composition of the Danish bourgeoisie and the ideological and political basis of their dominant economic position caused this group to fall apart when radical changes in the colonial policy came about. After 1970, the small Danish bourgeoisie began to lose its influence as a group, as changes occurred in economic and political colonial policy.

One of the most crucial questions of the latter part of the 1960s was the political direction to be followed by the Greenlandic elite. On the one hand, the elite was the mouthpiece for most of the Greenlandic population when struggling against suppression of the Greenlandic language, forced urbanization, and other trends. On the other hand, this Danish-speaking elite was becoming more and

more indispensable as an instrument for the Danish Government, which needed a group strong enough to implement and protect Danish interests and yet weak enough to be controlled.<sup>6</sup> Today we know that the Danish authorities did not quite succeed, and in the 1970s the élite became considerably radicalized in an anti-imperialist and anticapitalist movement. But why?

AFTER 1970:  
RADICALIZATION OF THE ÉLITE

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, decolonization has been one of the means used by the Danish authorities to keep control over internal development in Greenland. The destruction of the subsistence economy and the external integration of economic and social relations was accompanied by a certain political decolonization. It was a process instigated from "the top," and it was continued after World War II. The last of these reforms, which was carried out in 1973, delegated more power from Danish authorities directly to Greenland's 18 municipalities, thus evading any direct strengthening of the country's political unity. The process was carried out as a kind of decolonization initiated and permanently controlled by the Danish state. Of course without the Danish bureaucracy in Greenland, this policy could never have been implemented.

In these respects, the process of decolonization radically differed from decolonization in the latter part of the 1970s which resulted in Home Rule. In the first phase, the entire process was controlled by the colonial power, but in the second phase the Greenlandic élite was the leading force. It should be noted that in the 1950s and 1960s, no Greenlandic class or social group was able to carry on what had been created by the colonial authorities. Again, this was in contrast to the situation in the 1970s and 1980s.

After 1970, a gradual change of economic policy took place. It was now generally believed that a change of policy was needed to constrain the proletarianization, the alienation of the Greenlandic population in relation to economic "development," and to meet increasing social problems. However, there was no consensus about the means by which this was to be accomplished. As the Danish government moderated its economic development policy, the Danish bourgeoisie was deprived of part of its *raison d'être*. This took place concurrently with the rising of a more self-confident and critical Greenlandic élite.

The majority of the Greenlandic politicians who became active in fighting Danish colonialism in the 1970s gained much of their political

consciousness as a result of being educated in Denmark. Coming back to Greenland, they brought with them the ideological experiences from the campaign against the war in Vietnam, the student upheaval in 1968, and other international events. The young Greenlanders had among their allies left-wing groups in Denmark. The demand for self-government for Greenland was linked with the global fight against imperialism. It was typical for anti-imperialist rallies in Denmark to include speakers from the Young Greenlanders' Council (*Unge grønlænderes råd*). The Greenlanders returning home after several years in Denmark tended to be Danish-speaking nationalists and socialists.

Inside Greenland, the economic and social changes following two decades of the so-called modernization policy now resulted in undisguised confrontation between Danish authorities and Greenlanders. I want to point out a few of these confrontations. They are individual cases, but each of them developed into symbolic events for a failing colonial policy. The years between 1970 and 1975 were a period representing a great leap forward for the progressive political forces.

The shutdown of the mining town of Qutdligssat, and the forced moving of its 1200 inhabitants, is for many people today the most outstanding symbol of the Danish policy in the 1960s. Young people especially were influenced by this very heavy-handed policy, and the reaction was expressed in music, poetry, and political manifestos.

The general election to the Danish Parliament in September, 1971, resulted in the election of the young progressive Greenlandic politician, Moses Olsen, from South Greenland, who tipped the scales between the Liberal parties on the one side and the Social Democratic and Socialist parties on the other. He used this position to promote radical Greenlandic interests, and he voted in accordance with his conviction without being tied to one or the other side in Parliament. On several occasions, he was criticized for meddling in internal Danish affairs and he was physically threatened.

But the young Greenlanders had obtained a political platform and they were not slow to use it. The many confrontations in Parliament between Moses Olsen and, among others, the other Greenlandic member, the Minister for Greenland, intensified the ideological contradictions in Greenland. Thus, the attitude towards Moses Olsen in the Danish Parliament caused considerable reverberations.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Fitch and Oppenheimer (1966) used this phrase to describe a similar situation in Ghana.

<sup>7</sup>For details concerning the elections to Parliament (*Folketing*) and the Provincial Council (*Landsraad*) in 1971, see Brødsted and Gulløv (1977).

In relation to the political mobilization, no other single factor was of greater importance than the question of Greenland's association with the European Economic Community (EEC). On October 2, 1972, the Greenlandic population was to take a stance concerning Greenland's external relations for the first time in history. The Greenlandic population showed their attitude very clearly when 70% voted against participation in the EEC. This Greenlandic vote was to no avail because the votes of the 50,000 inhabitants in Greenland were pooled with the votes from 5 million inhabitants in Denmark, and the latter were in favor of EEC participation.

In Greenland, the result of the referendum was not *only* interpreted as a Greenlandic voice against EEC, but was considered to be a clear statement regarding any kind of foreign domination. Therefore, the referendum was far more important than the EEC question alone. In the Danish Parliament, in the Provincial Council of Greenland (*Landsraad*), and in the newspapers, Greenlandic politicians now demanded self-determination and self-government for Greenland. In Nuuk, progressive members of the Greenlandic élite formed a political group, called Siumut, which became the leading voice in *all* political matters concerning Greenland.

This widespread and intense reaction was much more radical than expected. A new wave of anti-imperialist feelings developed when the Danish Government permitted offshore oil drilling along West Greenland between 1973 and 1977. No attempts were made to gain support for such drilling in the Provincial Council of Greenland or among the Greenlandic public. In the autumn of 1975, the Provincial Council unanimously passed a resolution insisting that "the land and its resources belonged to the resident population." But the Danish government moved ahead with offshore exploration. The resistance to oil exploration was directed by a now more radicalized and organized Siumut group. The Siumut movement mobilized massive support for its objection to offshore oil drilling, and a broad and deeply felt wish to defend the land and its living resources arose among all hunters and fishermen.

In conclusion, it may be said that in the 1950s and 1960s, political changes were dominated by decolonization from the top, but during the 1970s decolonization was furthered by progressive groups in Greenland. The increasingly radicalized élite—later organized in the Siumut group—was now leading the process of decolonization. The Greenlandic demands for self-government were first formulated in principle in the Home Rule Committee which was composed exclusively of Greenlanders. Only later on was self-government *negotiated* in the Home Rule Commission.

### THE DOMINANCE OF POLITICS

The great leap forward in political development culminated with the formation of the political group, Siumut, and the publication of a fortnightly newspaper with the same name. Thereafter, Siumut developed into a broad political movement with branches in the majority of towns and villages. Other political parties developed, but it was Siumut which, from a more or less socialist viewpoint, formulated all political demands in the Home Rule Commission. As expressed by one of the principal Siumut leaders: "You are either for or against Siumut," and no other alternatives were advanced.

Siumut not only dominated the Home Rule process itself, but was the only active social force in Greenlandic society at the time. The establishment of Siumut ended the period characterized by unorganized Greenlandic opposition to the Danish colonial policy. The "élite period" developed into an era dominated by the political system. Siumut underwent the transformation into a political party with a core membership belonging to the élite. It is true that between 1975 and 1979 Siumut secured a strong basis among workers, hunters, and fishermen, but in practice it was still the élite which determined its policies.

There are three main reasons why the political system became the dominating social force in Greenland in the 1970s and remained so when Home Rule was introduced on May 1, 1979.

These reasons are:

- (1) The radicalization of the Greenlandic élite;
- (2) The decrease in power of the only group sharing a similar economic basis, the small Danish bourgeoisie; this group disintegrated with the slow collapse of the Danish-directed economic policy; and
- (3) The lack of organization and leadership outside the political sphere. This third reason relates to the undeveloped class structure of Greenlandic society. No socioeconomic group, or cluster of groups, was able to take the lead within the power structure.

A consequence of this dominance of politics was that the political powerholders occupied a relatively independent or autonomous position in relation to any socioeconomic group. It meant also that the political party attaining power after the first election following the introduction of Home Rule was provided with administrative, political, and economic power enabling it to act independently of social and economic groups *within* Greenland.

When the socialist Siumut party won the first Home Rule election and secured an absolute majority of seats in the *Landsting*, a precondition for directing Home Rule towards more profound self-government was fulfilled. The

negotiated Home Rule structure was a compromise, and Siumut wanted to speed up the process of taking over the many semiofficial organizations, which would increase the economic power of the political and administrative bodies in Nuuk.

TABLE 2. ELECTIONS TO THE GREENLAND LANDSTING. THE PARTIES' SHARE OF ALL VALID VOTES IN %; ELECTED MEMBERS OF LANDSTING IN BRACKETS.

	1979	1983	1984
Siumut	46.1%(13)	42.3%(12)	44.2%(11)
Atassut	41.7% (8)	46.6%(12)	43.8%(11)
Inuit			
Ataqatigiit	4.4% (0)	10.6% (2)	12.0% (3)
Sulissartut			
Partiat	5.6% (0)	-	-

Source: Ministry for Greenland. Yearbooks.

Since 1979, Siumut has stuck to its long-term goal of augmenting self-government. This has been possible to a surprisingly large extent, mainly because Siumut inherited and expanded what can be labelled the Greenlandic Home Rule "State."

#### THE HOME RULE "STATE"

The aim of this paper has *not* been to describe the factual content of Home Rule, as it was elaborated in the Danish-Greenlandic Home Rule Commission, but rather to analyze a specific type of self-government in its social and historical context. For a more detailed description of the institutions and functions pertaining to Greenlandic Home Rule, the reader is referred to other sources.<sup>8</sup>

A major principle behind Greenlandic self-government is that the Home Rule authorities in Nuuk are in a position to assume political responsibility in *all national* Greenlandic matters, provided they can create the economic foundation. There are a few exceptions to this overriding principle, of which the most important is that all mineral resources are subject to joint regulation by the Danish Government and the *Landsstyre* in Nuuk.

However, one cannot appreciate the scope and depth of power vested in the Home Rule

<sup>8</sup>In English, see Gulløv (1979), Foighel (1980), and Harhoff (1983). In Danish, the situation in relation to the work in the Home Rule Commission has been described by Brøsted (1979).

authorities without understanding the state-like structure of Greenland after 1979. With the establishment of Home Rule, the gradual construction of a proper state apparatus followed (i.e., a system of functions that relates to a state and a state power). The most conspicuous development in the past six years has been the expansive development of the Home Rule administration and the augmentation of bureaucratic personnel.

The Home Rule "state" is a "state" still in formation (i.e., a process the first steps of which were taken after 1979). Very few national institutions were located in Nuuk before 1979 and, in contrast to many Third World countries, the Home Rule authorities did not inherit a state structure already in place. On the other hand, they were not confronted with a *tabula rasa* situation, and the new authorities could choose to move institutions from Denmark to Greenland without actually changing the way these institutions were operating. In fact, this was what happened.

The Home Rule "state" is a *partial structure*. Although the country has acquired a high degree of political self-government, it is not a nation-state. A large degree of control is still vested in the old colonial power. For many years to come, state institutions, functions, and strategic know-how will remain under Danish control. It must be kept in mind that Greenland depends on economic aid from Denmark which covers three-quarters of all public expenditure.

In one area at least, Greenlandic Home Rule and its pertaining "state" apparatus is a true product of imperialism: it is *overdeveloped* compared to its social basis inside Greenland.<sup>9</sup> The character of the Home Rule "state," its power, its scope, and area of function are primarily products of the Danish presence in the country for more than 250 years, and not a product of national economic and social development. There is no internal Greenlandic economic basis to support the high standard of living, the existing level of housing, the highly developed social security system, and the general wage level.

This level of development is not the product of a national economic development, and the reproduction of the social structure and the "state" apparatus cannot be done within a national Greenlandic framework. Thus, in order to extend its administrative and economic control, Greenlandic society will for a long period remain dependent on foreign know-how and economic aid. On the other hand, this level of development was inherited by Home

<sup>9</sup>The theory of the overdeveloped post-colonial state was originally formulated by Hamza Alavi (1972).

Rule, and it is generally regarded as socially and politically indispensable.

In other words, the structural overdevelopment implies a continuing reliance on economic aid from Denmark. At the same time, the Home Rule "state" has become *relatively autonomous* in relation to Greenland's social and economic groups, which means that the Greenlandic "state" apparatus has assumed a high degree of internal independent economic power. A consequence of this is that the groups which control political power and staff the positions in the "state" apparatus are taking charge of whole sections of the economic system. This autonomous position of the Home Rule "state" is confirmed by the legal structure, such as it was determined by the Home Rule Commission, adopted by the Danish *Folketing*, and accepted by a referendum in Greenland in January, 1979. Seen as a legal fact, the Home Rule complex is defined in relation to the Danish state and *not* to the Greenlandic population (see Harhoff 1980a,b). The Home Rule Act specifies the distribution of power and authority between Greenland and Denmark, but says nothing about the rights of the Greenlandic population vis-à-vis the Home Rule structure.

In accepting the characterization of Greenland after Home Rule as having a statelike structure displaying traits of overdevelopment and autonomy, the dominating role of noneconomic forces in the transitional period leading to Home Rule must be recognized. The Greenlandic élite and the political parties in the years before and after introduction of Home Rule were part of this transaction. It was due to their efforts that those political constellations which gained political and administrative power during the formation of Home Rule came into control of all the most important political, economic, and administrative functions and institutions.

#### SELF-GOVERNMENT: GREENLAND UNDER HOME RULE

The Greenlandic Home Rule has surprised many people, especially in Denmark. The Home Rule Government (*Landsstyre*) has displayed vitality and a capacity to retain the initiative in a process leading to real self-government.

Today, after six years under Home Rule, the Greenlandic population has taken a more active position in determining the future of their own society. Guided by their own government, Greenland has left the EEC. A large number of public matters are governed by Greenlandic authorities. On January 1, 1985, Home Rule assumed control of production (trawlers, fishing industry) and of export. New educational institutions have been established, including the initial base for a

university in Nuuk. Leading positions of all kinds are more frequently filled by Greenlanders than before.

Although not anticipated by the Home Rule Commission, the Siumut *Landsstyre* has gradually assumed the responsibilities similar to those of a proper government. Likewise, the *Landsting* now functions as a national parliament with the power to overthrow the government, to move a vote of censure against a minister, etc.

From the earliest days of Home Rule, the Siumut government has endeavoured to take responsibility for as many public matters as possible and as quickly as possible. This is illustrated in speeding up the process of taking over KGH. In the process, Siumut has taken advantage of the developmental level of the Home Rule structure (i.e., the overdeveloped character of the Greenlandic "state" structure). Siumut and its present partner in the coalition government, Inuit Ataqatigiit, both want to expand self-government based on an egalitarian ideology. However, both are élite-based political parties with the leading people holding key political and bureaucratic positions. Therefore, the future political strategy to be followed by this group is especially important. In particular, the path followed by the economically privileged bureaucracy is of utmost importance because we are confronted with a bureaucracy that is (1) relatively large, (2) growing rapidly, (3) provided with a strategic power base, and (4) sensitive to pressure from Danish and conservative circles to perpetuate policies from old days.

The immediate outcome of Home Rule for the fast growing, progressive Greenlandic élite was that they obtained what was *their* strict and personal interest in Home Rule. More and more bureaucratic positions, from supervisory down to rank and file level, were immediately manned by Greenlanders. By itself, this was an undeniably positive consequence following Home Rule. In a political perspective, this development implied that a growing number of Greenlanders instead of Danes obtained the privileged jobs.

Given this fact, the question remains: Will the powerholding socialist élite be satisfied with the Greenlandization of the political and bureaucratic power structure? Although no answer can yet be given to this question, a few remarks relating to the *political* development seem appropriate.

Because of the dominant position of the political groups at the end of the 1970s, the future path of Greenlandic self-government has to be sought, to a large extent, in the internal development of the Siumut party and in the development of the alliances between the political groups and the socioeconomic groups



(fishermen, hunters, and wage earners), whose interests are declared to be of prime importance to Siumut (and Inuit Ataqatigiit).

Prior to the introduction of Home Rule, the Siumut party established a foothold among all strata of the population. At the time of achieving power, the party's policy was being influenced from large pressure groups as well as grassroot groups inside the party. However, the move away from a more élitarian practice (centralization and monopolization of decision making in the hands of a very few persons) has stopped completely after the establishment of Home Rule.

This intensification of an élit practice is exemplified by the merging of decisions taken by the Home Rule government and the party. In 1979 the ministers in the new government were taken from the founders and leaders of the party, and this unity of double leadership has since remained unchanged. All important decisions are made by a handful of persons in Nuuk. Obviously, this has resulted in various crises as when the former Minister for Greenland, Knud Hertling, was nominated to become a parliament candidate in 1981 only a few months after he joined Siumut. This was a decision taken by the leadership in Nuuk and apparently founded on political considerations, without being negotiated within the party.

Another consequence of the leadership merging is that it is not possible to distinguish between decisions taken by the Home Rule Government and decisions taken by the party leadership. The overall effect of this state of affairs is a growing isolation of the leadership, a fact which has been recognized and regretted by, among others, the Greenlandic premier, Jonathan Motzfeldt (*Sermitsiaq* 1982).

No single factor can explain this development. However, it is a fact that establishing Home Rule has been a rough and time-consuming job for all Danish-speaking and well educated Greenlanders in general and for the handful of persons constituting the political leadership specifically. This does not explain the concentration of political power, but nevertheless is a fact to be taken into consideration when looking into the causes behind the strengthening of the élitarian practice and the growing isolation of the political leadership from its socioeconomic base.

The necessity of establishing an organizational and an economic basis of self-government is another factor explaining the centrality of leadership and decision making. Despite explicit promises not to issue oil concessions in Jameson Land, East Greenland, against the will of the local population, the coalition government of Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit did so in late 1984. For both parties, fishing, hunting, and sheep farming are Greenland's principal trades, and they are supposed to remain so

in the future. Exploitation of nonrenewable mineral resources is to remain in a secondary position. But seen from Nuuk, far from the hunting districts of East Greenland, the focus is on Home Rule Government's need for money to put self-government in a more independent position. All revenues from exploitation of mineral resources accrue to the Home Rule Government until all Danish expenditures are covered; revenues beyond this level will be divided between Greenland and Denmark after renewed negotiations. Thus, revenues from oil exploitation are considered a necessity to the furtherance of a self-centered economic development.

On the one hand, Home Rule owes its strength to the dominance of a strong political system. On the other hand, a stagnant political structure dominated by a small élit tends to isolate this same group of people, thus creating internal contradictions among people originally in support of common goals.

#### CONCLUSION

In contrast to ANCSA and land claims agreements in Canada, Greenlandic Home Rule is a *political reform* recognizing a politically, geographically, and demographically undivided Greenland. For the Greenlandic majority, Home Rule is a process intended to create a "Greenland based on Greenlandic conditions," as it used to be expressed. In 1978, the leading Siumut politician, Lars Emil Johansen, referred to Home Rule as ". . . a political platform we can use in an incessant political development," and as ". . . an instrument in a process, a process leading the Greenlandic people away from the role of spectator . . ." (*Politiken* 1978).

The Siumut politicians are to be credited for creating a political organization which, from 1975, was the dominant force behind decolonization in the latter part of the 1970s. Establishing a national political system under the leadership of a small élit was a great leap forward, and, in assuming power for a state-like, overdeveloped Home Rule, the political leadership was put in a favorable position.

Those political parties seeking a far-reaching self-government have been in control of government and administration in Nuuk without interruption. Most recently, Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit have joined in a coalition government.

To promote self-government, the Home Rule authorities have to gain control of the economy and the administrative system as quickly as possible. But since Greenlandic know-how is not available to the extent that these aspirations demand, one has to employ Danish experts, the abolition of whom was a

main goal of self-government. Without a far-reaching administrative and political base, Siumut has been afraid of losing control over and initiative within the Home Rule process. But, a rapid take-over implies employment of more Danish bureaucrats, often recruited from the old colonial administration. This is contrary to the ambitions of self-government.

Within the actual structure of Home Rule administration, more economic control means a further concentration of population in the capital of Nuuk. No factor was under more severe attack before 1979 than the Danish-invented centralization policy. As a secondary consequence of this development and its adverse effects on the intentions laid down in Home Rule, one can mention the pressure on the housing market and further attacks on the Greenlandic language.

The combined effect of a political development perpetuated from an élite-dominated past and an intensified process towards self-government based on premises and institutions inherited from the colonial period has resulted in a contradictory situation where the goals and hopes created by self-government are undermined by the very steps taken to realize these ambitions.

Hopefully, only a few persons had expected Home Rule to be realized in just a few years. In fact, Home Rule is a framework of agreements and arrangements entered into by Denmark and Greenland; the particulars are to be filled in by the ambitions of the Greenlandic people, the most important sector in the future development of Greenland. Although military and international restrictions are placed on Home Rule, Greenland is becoming a self-governing nation in confederation with Denmark.

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