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A pathway to supplier status: Case of Greenland and Denmark

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On 24 October 2013, the Greenland parliament, Inatsisartut, lifted a decades-long moratorium on mining radioactive elements. For a Kingdom that has otherwise foregone the nuclear fuel cycle (except for medical purposes), the abolishment of the so-called 'zero tolerance'policy has the potential to catapult the Kingdom of Denmark (or 'Rigsfælleskabet') into one of the world's top suppliers of natural uranium. Greenland's status as a country within a state is accompanied by a complicated legal system within the Rigsfælleskabet, where Greenland has authority over its natural resources and Copenhagen is constitutionally responsible for the Kingdom's foreign, defence and security policies. This system is further complicated by Denmark's membership (and Greenland's non-membership) in the EU. Consequently, the process ahead for Greenland and Denmark in jointly developing a regulatory system to govern uranium will be complex, and one based on a steep learning curve. This paper will look at the process of how Greenland and Denmark are approaching the development of a governance system, not only for uranium production as a primary product but also as a byproduct of other resources, particularly REE (as is the case with the Kvanefjeld deposit in southern Greenland).

Author: Dr VESTERGAARD, Cindy (Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS))

Presenter: Dr VESTERGAARD, Cindy (Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS))

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