

PRICING TERRITORY, GOVERNING FUTURES: LESSONS FROM GREENLAND FOR THAILAND UNDER IMAGINATIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Greenland as a critical case of contemporary governance in which strategic valuation and future authorship have displaced rule-based sovereignty. It applies Imaginative Public Administration (IPA) and Governmental Power Market-ing (GPM) as analytical frameworks and employs a qualitative, theory-driven literature review and conceptual synthesis to analyze governance beyond formal institutions. The findings demonstrate how Greenland was transformed from a legally sovereign territory into a strategically priced security asset governed through future-oriented security imaginaries rather than formal annexation. U.S. future authorship, Denmark's institutional custodianship, NATO's alliance multiplication, and China and Russia's asymmetric roles collectively produced governance without conquest. The study finds a similar risk for Thailand—losing future-authoring power to external valuation. It argues that strategic autonomy can be restored only by building cognitive, symbolic, and co-creative capacities to reassert co-authorship in the global power market.

Keywords: Imaginative Public Administration; Governmental Power Market-ing, strategic valuation; future authorship, Greenland, operational sovereignty, strategic narratives

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INTRODUCTION

Greenland illustrates the emergence of strategic valuation as a replacement for rule-based sovereignty. Under the logic of Governmental Power Market-ing (GPM), the United States leverages defense integration to exercise de facto governance, rendering Danish de jure authority secondary to operational realities. Imaginative Public Administration (IPA) provides the theoretical key to this transition, demonstrating that sovereign power is currently secured through future authorship—the capacity to project security needs that make specific alliance architectures appear as inevitable survival imperatives. Greenland thus serves as a structural warning: states may retain sovereignty yet lose control when their futures are authored elsewhere, a risk highly relevant for middle powers such as Thailand. Accordingly, this study pursues two objectives: (1) to analyze Greenland as a case study demonstrating how territory is transformed from legal sovereignty into a strategically priced asset governed through future security imaginaries under GPM, kakistoscriptocracy, and IPA; and (2) to derive policy-relevant lessons for Thailand, a middle-power state, by examining how the loss of future-authoring capacity—rather than formal sovereignty—constitutes a critical governance risk in the contemporary global power market. In this sense, Greenland serves not as an isolated Arctic anomaly, but as a structural warning for states that retain legal sovereignty while increasingly being governed through futures imagined elsewhere (particularly thanks to Beard et al., 2026; Buchanan, 2019; Chambers, 2026; Chambers&Mayes-Osterman, 2026; Collins & Palmer, 2026; Gohwong, 2025; Jermsittiparsert et al., 2023; John, 2025; Malø, 2020; Palmer, 2026; Winkie, 2025; Wintour, 2026).

LITERATURE REVIEWS

This study did not treat these diverse bodies of literature as competing explanations or mutually exclusive theories. Instead, Imaginative Public Administration (IPA) provided the overarching epistemological frame, while Governmental Power Market-ing (GPM) explained the complex operational logic of power valuation within global exchanges. Sovereignty theory was utilized to clarify the persistent gap between legal status and practical authority, while strategic narratives identified the specific communicative mechanisms that framed geopolitical trajectories as inevitable. Geopolitics situated the case study spatially, and kakistoscriptocracy was specifically reserved as a strategic governance response to non-state risks rather than as a mere diagnostic label.

Imaginative Public Administration

Conventional rule-based and institution-centered approaches could not address governance in a context shaped by AI, technological acceleration, and platform power beyond bureaucratic reach. Although the Minnowbrook I–III frameworks adapted in values and tools, they remained tethered to the state and limited by procedural constraints. Imaginative Public Administration (IPA), by contrast, reoriented governance toward futures, redefining the state as a cognitive–symbolic actor whose authority rests on its ability to envision, simulate, and narrate futures—often in collaboration with AI—and to convert anticipatory imagination into tangible policy and organizational outcomes (Gohwong, 2025).

Governmental power market-ing in the vu-chaos world

Governmental Power Market-ing (GPM) conceptualized governance as the production and circulation of power within a global marketplace rather than its exercise through sovereign jurisdiction alone. States governed by packaging and exchanging strategic offerings—such as security, access, infrastructure, and alignment—treating territory and security as value propositions instead of fixed legal attributes. Power was produced through valuation, communication, and exchange, facilitating territorial governance without the need for annexation. In this framework, governance worked by trading and circulating authority through negotiated deals, not by extending formal jurisdiction (Jermsittiparsert et al., 2023).

Sovereignty Reconsidered

The divide between de jure authority and de facto control was a foundational legal principle, not a modern invention. Roman law separated ius (law/right) from factum (fact/act), Gratian legitimized governance without annexation, and Aquinas and Grotius further distinguished legitimacy from effectiveness. Modern theorists and international law codified this fragmentation of sovereignty, enabling governance through indirect control while legal authority formally persisted, thereby normalizing governance without annexation (particularly thanks to Aquinas, 1913, n.d., 2007; Arendt, 1970; Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, 1933; Crawford, 2006; Dicey, 1915; Gratian, 1854; Grotius, 1625/2001; Justinian I, 1889; Kaufman, 2022; Kelsen, 1949; Lauterpacht, 1947; Schmitt, 2005; Weber, 1978).

Strategic Narratives and Communication Power

The strategic narratives and communication power showed how political actors constructed shared interpretations of threat, necessity, and inevitability in order to shape governance outcomes. The literature demonstrated that strategic narratives functioned as instruments of communication power by organizing understandings of the past, present, and especially the future, thereby narrowing the range of politically imaginable alternatives and reducing the relevance of deliberation. By presenting certain futures as unavoidable, security- and risk-focused narratives shaped acceptable choices. They governed by shaping expectations and aligning audiences, reducing uncertainty and legitimizing contested actions outside formal authority (particularly thanks to Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013, 2017; Zhang, 2020).

Table 1 showed how narrative construction connected GPM's valuation with IPA's anticipatory governance.

Dimension	Strategic Planning	Imaginative Public Administration (IPA)
Core Logic	Works within constraints—aligning capabilities with conditions to optimize outcomes	Works on constraints—deploying imagination to reshape what becomes institutionally thinkable and strategically achievable
Role of Scenarios	Scenarios as tools: testing assumptions and managing uncertainty within existing planning frameworks	Futures as governance: determining which possibilities attain cognitive and institutional legitimacy
Mode of Authority	Downstream compliance: formal routines, metrics, and risk protocols	Upstream imagination: Power is exerted prior to planning by structuring the symbolic, cognitive, and epistemic frameworks that direct capital and focus

Source: David et al.(2023), Gohwong (2025), Rothaermel (2024), Daniello & Laubsch (2008)

Kakistoscriptocracy

Kakistoscriptocracy described a governance context in which weakened state capacity enabled net-state actors to destabilize authority. Rather than endorsing illegality, engagement with cybercriminals functioned as a regulatory strategy, drawing on historical state–pirate analogies to convert disruption into governable assets. Legalization and regulation relocated cyber capabilities into monitored jurisdictions, enabling taxation, oversight, and contractual constraint. This approach addressed governance vacuums by reducing the scale and autonomy of illicit operations without attributing systemic failure to any single actor or territory (particularly thanks to Durand & Vergne, 2013; Gohwong, 2023; Jermsittiparsert et al., 2023; Malcolm, 2015; Weimer & Vining, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative, theory-driven design based on literature review and conceptual synthesis to examine sovereignty as exercised through valuation, security, and future-oriented governance rather than territorial command. IPA framed governance as a cognitive–symbolic process of future-authoring, while GPM explained how power circulates in global markets. By utilizing sovereignty theory to distinguish formal legal status from practical influence, the study analyzed strategic narratives as the primary communicative tools used to engineer a sense of geopolitical inevitability. Kakistoscriptocracy was applied as a strategic framework for assessing non-state risks. Greenland functioned as the principal case study, with Thailand incorporated as a comparative reference. Methodologically, the study advanced an integrated framework that combined IPA, GPM, and sovereignty theory to examine authority beyond formal institutions, without presupposing administrative breakdown or sovereignty erosion.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Territorial transformation in Greenland

This findings section analyzed Greenland as a strategic case of contemporary governance transformation, addressing its Arctic strategic context, governance beyond formal institutions through IPA, territorial reconfiguration via GPM, the divergence between de jure sovereignty and de facto control, and the influence of strategic narratives and communicative power. As a semi-autonomous territory under Danish sovereignty with considerable Arctic security significance, Greenland provided an empirical setting to observe governance operating beyond formal institutions. The analysis demonstrated how territory was reconfigured from legal sovereignty into a strategically priced asset through future-oriented security imaginaries.

Greenland, the world's largest Arctic island, had about 80 percent of its land covered by ice, leaving settlements clustered along the coasts. Formerly a Danish colony, its colonial status was formally phased out by the 1953 constitutional reform, granting Greenlanders equal legal status within the Kingdom of Denmark, later endorsed by the United Nations. In security aspects, the U.S.–Denmark Defense Agreement of 1951 and its amendment in 2004 established a continuous U.S. military presence, reinforcing Greenland's lasting significance in North Atlantic and Arctic defense frameworks (particularly thanks to Beukel et al., 2010; Bure, 1956; Denmark & United States of America, 1951, 2004; Egede, 2022; Hansen, 1994; Harmsen, 2024; Nielsen & Nielsen, 2021; Rink, 1877/2022; Rud, 2017; Smith, 2016; Sørensen, 2006).

Under IPA, the United States governed Greenland through future authorship rather than territorial control, stabilizing a singular Arctic security horizon via crisis framing, alliance coordination, and bureaucratic alignment. The Greenland deal operated as a firebreak that institutionalized coercive pressure while expanding de facto presence without altering sovereignty. Denmark did not author Greenland's future but institutionalized a collapsed possibility space shaped by U.S. security imaginaries, preserving symbolic sovereignty through legal certification. Russia practiced negative governance by hardening security inevitability through Arctic signaling and ambiguity. China acted as a future deferrer, maintaining long-horizon logistical and resource options without contesting security dominance. NATO functioned as a future multiplier, scaling U.S. assumptions across alliance systems and normalizing inevitability without territorial control. Collectively, these roles demonstrated that GPM transactions circulate through valuation and imaginative positioning rather than juridical exchange alone (particularly thanks to Ali & Duggal, 2026; Beard et al., 2026; Beukel et al., 2010; Blackwill & Campbell, 2016; Buchanan, 2019; Bure, 1956; Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2026; Chambers, 2026; Chambers & Mayes-Osterman, 2026; Collins & Palmer, 2026; Denmark & United States of America, 1951, 2004; Dillon, 2021; Francis, 2026; Hansen, 1994; Harmsen, 2024; John, 2025; John et al., 2026; Kristensen & Rahbek-Clemmensen, 2018; Kola, 2026; Lynch, 2011; Malø, 2020; Nielsen & Nielsen, 2021; Nuttall,

2024; Osborn, 2026; Palmer, 2026; Rudd, 2022; Simonyi, 2026; Smith, 2016; Tankersley et al., 2026; Winkie, 2025; Wintour, 2026).

The Greenland framework worked less as a legal resolution than as GPM, reframing coercion into the language of consensus. Following U.S. tariff threats (10–25%), President Trump declared “total access,” “no cost,” and “no time limit” for military expansion, despite Denmark, Greenland, and NATO confirming no formal mandate. Tariff suspension upon the announcement recast penalties as negotiated outcomes. Military access—not sovereignty change—was the operative result. Packaging replaced documentation with slogans; China–Russia threats supplied passion; force was denied while economic and alliance pressure produced territorial-like effects (paradox); and media arenas substituted legal fora (place/promotion). Denmark avoided escalation, but Greenland became a priced security asset under expanding operational access without formal agreement (particularly thanks to Jermsittiparsert et al., 2023; Kola, 2026; Palmer, 2026; Tankersley et al., 2026; Wintour, 2026). Moreover, the Greenland framework should also be read through the GPM transaction boundary, functioning as a strategic price signal instead of a completed legal exchange. According to GPM logic, valuation preceded juridical closure—establishing baselines and shifting reference points that shaped stakeholder expectations. This signaling of acceptable access, permissible expansion, and tolerated ambiguity stabilized the power market well before any sovereignty formally changed hands. The divide between narrative and reality is eliminated once power is understood to circulate through valuation (Jermsittiparsert et al., 2023).

In de jure terms, Greenland remained fully under Danish sovereignty, as Danish authorities consistently reaffirmed that sovereignty was not subject to negotiation, no treaty revision had occurred, and NATO had not been authorized to negotiate on Greenland’s behalf. In de facto terms, however, the governance in this area increasingly operated through security access and defense architectures, including military access arrangements and integration into Arctic surveillance and defense planning. These mechanisms gave practical influence over Greenland’s security path without changing its legal status. Denmark occupied a structurally weakened position. Although it retained formal authority and political responsibility, it did not command Greenland’s security frameworks. Authority thus served chiefly as a legal constraint, revealing how strategic control expanded through access and infrastructure even as sovereignty endured.

In the Greenland case, strategic narratives and communicative influence determined governance outcomes by producing shared interpretations of threat, necessity, and inevitability. The United States governed less through formal authority than through security and risk narratives—surveillance, missile defense, alliance preparedness, and imagined future threats—that scripted a singular trajectory for Greenland’s future. These narratives narrowed the space of politically imaginable alternatives: neutrality was reframed as negligent, autonomous choice as an unrealistic luxury, and delay as irresponsible. By stabilizing expectations and aligning audiences, communication power rendered “Greenland as a security asset” the only future that appeared rational. Denmark’s role was complementary: while reaffirming de jure sovereignty, it institutionalized the narratively stabilized option through procedures and legal continuity. Strategic narratives thus bridged GPM’s valuation and IPA’s anticipatory governance, enabling control without annexation (particularly thanks to Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013, 2017; Zhang, 2020).

Operationalizing IPA Wings in the Thai Administrative Context

In a Greenland-type strategic logic, Thailand’s vulnerability stemmed not from coercion but from external valuation that displaced its capacity for future self-definition. Echoing Eisenhower-era domino reasoning and the 1952 Comparative Administration model, administrative capacity in countries such as Thailand was historically aligned with externally authored strategic horizons, positioning public administration as adaptive rather than future-

authoring (particularly thanks to Department of Defense, 1971; Eisenhower, 1954; Papić, 2020; Public Administration Clearing House, 1952). The Government Data Center and Cloud Service (GDCC) demonstrated that Thailand's data governance constraints did not arise from infrastructural absence but from the administrative logic governing infrastructural use. Under the Cognitive Wing, GDCC centralized storage, access control, auditability, interoperability, and metadata governance in a manner that made national data visibility technically feasible. Yet this visibility was mobilized primarily for compliance, risk management, and standards enforcement rather than for constraint-led anticipatory planning. Symbolically, GDCC materialized narratives of digital alignment and reliability without articulating data as an explicitly Thai-investable future. Co-creatively, it enabled shared technical environments but not a shared future portfolio, allowing external standards, platforms, and investments to continue functioning as de facto selectors of Thailand's digital trajectory. Therefore, as the IPA thesis warned: when Thailand managed the present without imagining its own future, it became a tenant in a future authored by outsiders (particularly thanks to Digital Government Development Committee, 2023; Gohwong, 2025; Gohwong et al., 2025; Government of Thailand, 2019a, 2019b; Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2018; Office of the National Digital Economy and Society Commission, 2019).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Greenland shows that modern territorial governance rests on future authorship and strategic valuation, not formal sovereignty. Denmark retained de jure authority over Greenland, yet its governing role was reduced to institutional custodianship—stabilizing and legalizing a security future authored elsewhere while absorbing political risk. This showed that sovereignty no longer guarantees strategic autonomy. Thailand faces a parallel vulnerability in a Greenland-type configuration: not coercion, but external valuation that frames its geography and openness as systemically necessary. Once futures are framed as inevitable, alternatives appear irrational in advance. The key danger for states is losing future-authoring power, remaining sovereign in law but ruled by external imaginaries. Seen through kakistoscriptocracy, Denmark's Greenland dilemma was less about losing sovereignty than about eroding state capacity as power shifted into stateless and net-state domains. Legal formalism and moral sovereignty proved inadequate under access-over-sovereignty logics exploited by non-state actors. The rational response was the “corsair option”: legalizing, taxing, and mandating dark cyber capabilities to reclaim power. Historically, this strategy subordinated predatory actors to state control through authorization and fiscal rules. Applied to Denmark, such a turn would not directly confront U.S. pressure over Greenland but would expand hidden state capacity in cyber, intelligence, and hybrid domains, thereby altering Denmark's bargaining position and restoring effective sovereignty where formal authority alone no longer sufficed. The implication is stark: under conditions of kakistoscriptocracy, states that rely exclusively on legality risk strategic marginalization, whereas those that can govern the “dark” through controlled legalization may regain jurisdictional relevance in asymmetrical power contests. However, this discussion is an analytical examination of state capacity erosion under kakistoscriptocracy and does not endorse illegality. Historical corsair practices and cyber/hybrid analogues are cited only to show how states have reasserted control over predatory actors through legalization, taxation, and institutional incorporation. Modern application demands constitutional authority, ethical oversight, and compliance with international law on sovereignty, cybersecurity, and force. The analysis is descriptive and conceptual, explaining governance adaptation under asymmetric power rather than prescribing unlawful action (particularly thanks to Durand & Vergne, 2013; Gohwong, 2023; Malcolm, 2015; Takach, 2023).

Next, the asymmetry between the United States and Denmark explains why Denmark was structurally disadvantaged. The United States did not operate as a classical state constrained by institutional legality, but as a power-market actor that priced Greenland as a security asset, circulated this valuation through alliance narratives, and aligned partners around an authored future. Unlike the United States, Denmark continued to govern through institutional state logic—rule-based legitimacy, custodial oversight, and reactive administration—without mechanisms of strategic valuation or narrative pricing. GPM shows that price-setters and future-authors govern faster than rule-keepers (Jermsittiparsert et al., 2023). Thus, the United States scripted Greenland's future, while Denmark sustained its present. Sovereignty stayed Danish legally, but future-authoring power lay outside. Under IPA and GPM, governance rests on control of futures, not formal authority.

Lastly, viewed through IPA and GPM, Thailand's strategic exposure did not arise from territorial encroachment but from being priced through security architectures, infrastructural standards, and future-oriented narratives that constrained policy choice. Power functioned as a mechanism of valuation, turning Thailand into a price-taker in a market of futures authored by others. American development administration, Chinese connectivity, and Russian risk-amplification created a field of structural constraints that bypassed traditional sovereignty. In this environment, governance was exercised not through annexation, but through the authorship of inevitable security and development paths that Thailand was forced to internalize and fund. The comparative implication—taking Denmark as a reference rather than a template—is that Thailand must move beyond custodianship toward future co-authorship by building measurable capacity across the three IPA wings: constraints-led cognitive assessment (Cognitive Wing), credible strategic narratives (Symbolic Wing), and co-creative institutional mandates (Co-Creative Wing). Absent such a shift, Thailand governed competently but was still bound by futures written abroad (particularly thanks to Jermsittiparsert et al., 2023; Public Administration Clearing House, 1952; Papic, 2020; Malmgren, 2015; Santasombat & Lee, 2024; Lynch, 2011; Studin, 2022; Rozman & Christoffersen, 2023; Wyatt, 2003).

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