

Greenland: Trump's Special Operation

George Anglițoiu¹

Abstract: *The issue of Greenland and the US militant discourse about the future of the region have been of great interest in the last years. This hasty and unforeseen evolution of events has raised a number of significant questions about the relations between the US (the preeminent Western power in the international system) and the largest island on Earth, which has the lowest population per surface ratio, but plenty of untapped resources of fresh water, minerals, carbon and green energy, an unrestricted panorama of the Arctic lights, pristine ice coastline and the potential for unchecked military multirole bases with strategic positioning. Drawing on a comparative historical analysis, this article argues that Greenland is managed with hard-power tools by the current US administration. Our findings show that this approach is part of the great power competition, where claims of historical and national security reasons are used to take over territories and population, regardless of the international law and the will of the local people. We also underline the potentially divisive policy implications for NATO and the EU.*

Keywords: *Special operation, Melian Dialogue, devolution, green democracy, Arctic hegemony, EU military alliance, NATO.*

Boasting about foreign policy

In this global digital village of ours, where any opinionated person – empowered by a smartphone or a laptop with embedded artificial intelligence and connected to social platforms or standard internet – can post and share his/her thoughts and convictions with almost no restrictions in terms of quality or quantity, it is no wonder that influencers abound. A plethora of catchy, flashy, smart words are on display for instant impact on larger than ever audiences. *Strategic, sensitive, critical, vital* are some of the terms used when debating foreign policy and not only.

Trump's second term as US President is concurrently similar with and different from his first term in office. The similarities stem from the same *Art of the deal* (1987)² vision presented as the cornerstone of remodelling the world, both domestically and at global level. *Make America Great Again* remains the all-encompassing motto of a new *Golden Age* which should establish its re-founding father as the most important and glorious president of all times, a faultless and invincible leader with the aura of a hero.

¹ George Anglițoiu is Professor at the Department of International Relations and European Integration, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania, and Visiting Professor at the Institute for Political Studies of the University of Münster, Germany.

E-mail: george[at]anglitoiu.ro.

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² Based on success axioms like *think big, maximise options, promote yourself and deliver, use leverage, negotiate directly, fight back*, etc. See Trump, D., with Schwartz, T., (1987). *The Art of the Deal*, New York: Random House.

However, the second term of the Trump Administration brought forth a multitude of postulates, initiatives and expectations of geostrategic essence, which revived the realist perspective that geopolitics is expansionism by other means. Proclaimed as a top priority during the first term, *Make America Great Again* got a significant add-on to its original meaning: it became a corollary of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. Half a century after the outbreak of the American War of Independence, President Monroe promoted a national security strategy based on overly optimistic assumptions and meant to establish the United States as an ambitious actor within its own hemisphere. Such a boastful self-positioning shows that the US sought to be on an equal footing with the great powers of the European Concert, by restricting their presence in the Western Hemisphere. In the 19th century, several factors – territorial acquisitions from colonial powers, frontier wars with the native tribes and a decolonised country (i.e., Mexico) – contributed significantly to the enlargement of the American federation. Yet, it was the war against the first hegemon of the transatlantic world, i.e. Spain, which put the United States on the map of emerging global powers.

Two centuries later, the United States, the preeminent Western power following the Second World War and the Cold War, issued a new National Security Strategy (2025), which downgrades the relationship with the Old Continent. This time, Europe is not considered a geostrategic competitor, but a decadent, inefficient and costly partner, incapable of ensuring its own security.

Without delving into the formative years of Trump, it is obvious that he operates with a pragmatic vision when he talks about or promotes radical solutions, like tariffs and territorial quid-pro-quos. Seen as hard power tools, they have historical reference, but not in a rule-based international society. It is one thing to quote the founding fathers on the need for liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and another to impose on allies, partners, and competitors a coercive toolbox based on American exceptionalism.

Methodology

The United States' relations with Greenland (a resource bonanza, with a strategic position in the Arctic) and its European allies, who are also NATO members, are tackled using mainly a comparative historical analysis in International Relations. We use literature review to show how the recurrence of certain historical patterns can be applied to explain certain dynamics in the field. Thus, we analyse the link between the postulate *Make America Great Again* and the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. Additionally, we present a reinterpretation of Thucydides's Melian Dialogue, with references to the work of Graham Allison. Debating the latter's argument, we argue that ambitious global powers become hardliners and bound for war in a competition for supremacy, and show how this worldview is contributing to the idea that Greenland's acquisition would strengthen the US position in the current grand rivalry. The limitations of the paper derive from the constraints of the historical analysis (we can only apply this framework to the current international context) and the type of data we used, i.e. mainly open-source data.

The Melian Dialogue redux

One of the most intriguing and notable episodes of the Peloponnesian War was the siege and destruction of neutral Melos (an island polis founded by the Dorians³), in 416 BC, by Athens – the maritime hegemon of the Delian League and arch-rival of Sparta. Without going into details, it is worth mentioning the rationale behind the Athenian aggression in the above-mentioned war: i.e., Athens' inescapable drive to be a hegemon, regardless of its democratic constitution, which should have instilled the principle of self-containment into its foreign and security policy. The dialogue between Melians and Athenians (a classical read for students of History of International Relations), as rendered by Thucydides⁴, showcases the stark differences between pleas for peace, morality and neutrality on the one hand, and the imposition of terms and coercive diplomacy on the other. The failure of the negotiations and the barbaric behaviour of the Athenians in the name of asserting power status⁵ have transcended time and space, carving out the imperial path of offensive states unconstrained by political obligations or the humanitarian responsibility to protect. Nowadays, Thucydides is remembered mainly by what Professor Graham Allison coined in 2012 as the *Thucydides Trap*⁶, meaning the high predictability of war when a challenger becomes too ambitious and explicit for the established hegemon. While we do not share completely Allison's theory⁷, we agree that rivals prioritise adversity, especially when the stakes are high and imply survival and safeguarding the dominant status.

Turning to the second term of Trump's administration, we can see that it began with a flurry of regional imperatives, including the need for the United States to acquire or subordinate Greenland as part of the ultimate geostrategic necessity to prevent

³ The same Greek ethnic group that founded Sparta. Therefore, it could be considered that Melos was a colony of Sparta, but not a member of its Peloponnesian League, which opposed Athens and its expansion.

⁴ Thucydides, (2013). *Delphi Complete Works of Thucydides* (The Peloponnesian War, Book 5, Chapters 84–116), Delphi Ancient Classics 19, Illustrated, Version 2, eBook.

⁵ Compare, for instance, the most quoted saying of the Athenians ("...you know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must") with the position of Trump's top aide Stephen Miller (White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Homeland Security Advisor): "We live in a world in which you can talk all you want about international niceties and everything else, but we live in a world—in the real world, Jake—that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power. These are the iron laws of the world that have existed since the beginning of time", in Froman, M., (2026). "Getting Might Right", *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 9. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/articles/getting-might-right>.

⁶ Allison, G., (2012). "Thucydides's Trap Has Been Sprung in the Pacific", *Financial Times*, August 21. His theory was later developed in a 2017 book.

⁷ Athens was not an emerging rival to Sparta's supposedly established hegemony. **Both were competing for hegemony** in the Greater Greece area, and became rivals after their joint victory over the regional superpower - the Persian Empire. We agree with Allison's (statistical) assessment about the propensity to wage war when such ambitious powers engage in hegemon versus challenger dynamics. Nonetheless, this could not directly and unconditionally be related to Thucydides' reasoning about the causes of the Peloponnesian war: "...for these were now the two leading powers, the one strong by land and the other by sea... So that from the Persian to the Peloponnesian War, **the Lacedaemonians and the Athenians were perpetually fighting or making peace**, either with one another or with their own revolted allies; thus, they attained military efficiency, and learned experience in the school of danger... The real though unavowed cause I believe to have been **the growth of the Athenian power, which terrified the Lacedaemonians and forced them into war...**" For the sake of a complete argument, a better explanation of the current American-Chinese rivalry could have been provided by reference to Herodotus' trap, taking into account the Hellenic League's US-like expanding interest in the Aegean Sea and Asia Minor (which could be considered Greece's Taiwan of sorts), and Persia's Chinese-like historical and regional hegemony as Middle Kingdom.

America's enemies from positioning themselves too close to its Arctic neighbourhood. Thus, in a re-enactment of the Melian Dialogue, the United States would play the role of Athens, and Greenland the part of Melos. Yet, China or Russia cannot be easily compared to Sparta to whom the original Melos was historically related and sympathetic. Such a role could be attributed to the Kingdom of Denmark, a traditional ally of the United States and, at the same time, the kin state still holding Greenland under its sovereignty, as an autonomous entity, according to both domestic and international law.

The meaning of this comparison is not to force unnecessary historical parallels, but to highlight the similarities between foreign policy actions and draw relevant conclusions. For instance, when we talk about the merits of democracy, Athens of the 5th century BC represents the starting point for the citizens' empowerment and the containment of tyranny. However, when assessed by its foreign and security policy, the same Athens could be portrayed as hegemonic-driven and easily belligerent. Similarly, if we turn our attention to the United States, whose democratic model was so praised by the French thinker Alexis de Tocqueville in the first half of the 19th century, the recent stratocratic drive of President Donald Trump and his fixation on territorial gains, as guarantees for securing obedience and control, become obvious. The joint enemy of Athens and Sparta, during their collective Hellenic League resistance against invasion, was the Persian Empire, whose Achaemenid rulers were constantly asking for offerings of water and land as signs of submission. Millennia later, and despite all the supposedly learnt lessons from disastrous overseas campaigns, like Vietnam, Iraq or Afghanistan, "the leader of the free world" is imperatively asking his allies for a "piece of ice"⁸, as a token of continued alliance and honouring of the NATO treaty provisions related to common defence.

Trump's heritage and real estate mentality

Since the times of the biographers of Ancient World leaders, the methods used to encompass one's personality have been based on the formative years of childhood and adolescence. For over 40 years, Trump has been the subject of many news, articles, books, documentaries, movies, songs and television shows, ranging from highly appreciative to very critical. If we use Focalism⁹ to better understand Trump, we should start by identifying his recurrent traits reflected in his discourse and actions. Thus, some of his most recognisable ideas include words like *tremendous*, *big*, *grand*,

⁸ "It's the United States alone that can protect this giant mass of land, this giant piece of ice, develop it and improve it, and make it so that it's good for Europe, and safe for Europe, and good for us. And that's the reason I'm seeking immediate negotiations to, once again, discuss the acquisition of Greenland by the United States – just as we have acquired many other territories throughout our history". For Trump's full range of arguments regarding the United States' legitimate claim to acquire "this big, beautiful piece of land" from "ungrateful" Denmark, which was "totally unable to defend either itself or Greenland" in World War II and is still not "in any position to secure Greenland". World Economic Forum, (2026). "Davos 2026: Special Address by Donald J Trump, President of the United States of America", January 21. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2026/01/davos-2026-special-address-donald-trump-president-united-states-america/?ref=nl-huff-a-occ>.

⁹ Personal concept that could be defined as the theory and practice of thinking, communicating, deciding and doing based on a *primary centre* as the top/main reason, representation and goal of power. For details, see Angliṭoiu, G., (2025). "Focalism. An Introduction", *Europolity*, Vol. 19, No. 2. Available at: <https://europolity.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/2.-ANGLITOIU.pdf>.

beautiful, golden, perfect, total, absolute, etc., which are superlatives associated with his leadership, in opposition to that of his counterparts described as *bad, stupid, weak, disaster*, etc. His repetitive, simple and direct messages are emphasised by the use of rhetorical postulates like *believe me, everybody knows, many, many, can you believe it* to outline the implacable *we will win*. Many of his political subordinates and allies already consider him as “the greatest American president”¹⁰, “Reagan plus plus plus”¹¹ or worthy of being immortalised on Mount Rushmore¹². In much the same way, his critics, including notorious academics¹³ in the field of International Relations, are very active in depicting him as obsessed with himself, like the main character of the “Great Man” salvation myth¹⁴. An assessment of Trump’s political profile should include his business acumen, as scion of an important real estate investor, and the celebrity status he gained by being a socialite and a big spender. Raised under the strict tutelage of his dominant father, Trump has been evaluated as fearful of criticism, which could explain his propensity for grandeur and the denial of errors or defeats¹⁵.

A paradox of geopolitics is its inner, ad-hoc, real estate-like component represented by the strong will to effectively own and control territorial assets. Therefore, Trump could be considered relevant and qualified for promoting or defending the American global interests and control. Just like in the real estate business, where Trump spent his formative years as a rent collecting manager, the treatment applied to underperforming allies who fail to pay their dues within the NATO alliance may translate into a formal notification and eventual eviction from NATO, where the main contributor is the United States. In this context, Greenland could become the rent or price to be paid by Denmark for outstanding security debts. Such a real estate mentality, coupled with bullying diplomacy, may seem justified in the eyes of an outraged MAGA establishment shocked by the rotten condition of a deviant Europe. Gone are the precautions of the past and the resort to incrementalist diplomacy. The disregard for Europe – no longer seen as a worthy ally – is mixed with the lack of bipartisan

¹⁰ See, for instance, the congressional hearing of US Attorney General Pam Bondi on the Epstein case, a difficult topic affecting Trump’s credibility and legacy:

“BONDI: I find it interesting that she keeps going after President Trump, the greatest president in American history. And if they could maintain their composure... (LAUGHTER) BONDI: ... this isn't a circus. This is a hearing...” - PBS News, (2026). “Bondi sidesteps Epstein questions in tense Judiciary Committee hearing”, February 11, full transcript. Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/bondi-sidesteps-epstein-questions-in-tense-judiciary-committee-hearing>.

¹¹ See the enthusiastic praise by Senator Graham Lindsey, a pro-interventionist hardliner, who back in 2016 used to consider Trump “crazy” and “unfit for office”, only to contradict his opinion by stating that Trump is “the gold standard for modern Republican presidents” and “the greatest president of all time” - Fox News Clips, (2026). *Sen Lindsey Graham: Trump just surpassed Reagan*, March 1. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-Xja5UCagg>.

¹² See the post on X by the Republican Colorado Representative Lauren Boebert, a fierce Trump loyalist: <https://x.com/laurenboebert/status/1895126009776873601>.

¹³ Walt, S.M., (2025). “How Trump Will Be Remembered: No other President has made his time in office so nakedly about himself and his legacy”, *Foreign Policy*, June 30. Available at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/06/30/trump-president-us-history/>.

¹⁴ See, for instance, the chapters “Restoring American Leadership Abroad” and “Colossal Rebuilding of the Military”, based on the principle of “Peace through strength”, of the first term’s self-recorded merits, in *The White House, “As of January 2021 Trump Administration Accomplishments”*. Available at: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/trump-administration-accomplishments/>.

¹⁵ See, for example, the insights on family dynamics by his niece, Mary L. Trump, a trained clinical psychologist, in her bestseller *Too Much and Never Enough: How my family created the world's most dangerous man*, Simon & Schuster, New York, London, 2020, eBook.

congressional accountability in shaping foreign policy. Trump does not seem bent on involving the Congress in strategizing the foreign and security policy, one possible reason for this being GOP's narrow majority in both chambers¹⁶. His tendency to behave like a presidential monarch is reflected by his habit to entrust family members and friends with official or informal tasks in representing US interests at international level. Hence, the initial involvement of his eldest son in the first exploratory visit to Greenland – following the announced interest in its acquisition – comes as no surprise¹⁷. Experts¹⁸ on both sides of the Atlantic have expressed strong negative opinions about the legality, feasibility, cost-efficiency, and necessity of Greenland's acquisition by the United States under the Trump administration or the next US administration. Without reiterating their ideas (that anyway do not vary much), it should be highlighted that, regardless of their tone, bias, stake and power of persuasion, the most important topic is not Greenland *per se*, but the dawn of a new age of conquest, if we take into account the Trump administration's focalist drive to achieve big and memorable geostrategic results. Beyond the perennial enigmatic discourse, based on national security reasons, the global focus of decision-makers on *raw, essential, critical, vital, sensitive, rare, strategic* resources for ensuring an important or a superior/hegemonic position – to be achieved by a mix of bullying diplomacy and stratocratic means – is explicit. Moreover, such competing behaviours occur regardless of what people understand by and define as international law and rules-based order.

The Arctic region fits the description of what the ideal *must-have space* for the expansionist powers of our time should be: a large territory, rich in resources, with a significant position on the map, and sparsely populated (thus, less prone to protests

¹⁶ To date, there is no Congressional Research Service (CRS) report arguing for the annexation or purchase of Greenland, and analysing the legal framework, geopolitical consequences and contingency planning. The only CRS analysis of relevance is neutral and informative in its approach, while including a brief section about "Issues for Congress" regarding the powers of the US Congress and recent parliamentary initiatives - see Garding, S.E., (2026). *Greenland, Denmark, and US Relations*, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, January 22. Available at: <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN12643>.

On the one hand, there are two bills "Make Greenland Great Again Act" (H.R. 361 of January 2025) and "Greenland Annexation and Statehood Act" (H.R. 7012 of January 2026) aimed at authorising the President to enter negotiations with Denmark and take the necessary steps to acquire Greenland and make it a state of the American federation. See, for instance, Representative Randy Fine's legislative initiative H.R. 7012: Congressman Randy Fine (6th District of Florida), (2026). "Congressman Fine Introduces Greenland Annexation and Statehood Act to Strengthen U.S. National Security and Put Our Adversaries on Notice", Washington, January 12. Available at: <https://fine.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=118>. In this context, it is noteworthy that Rep. Fine identifies the Russian Federation and China as "adversaries" (in the Arctic), while Trump repeatedly calls Putin and Xi Jinping "(very good) friend(s)". On the other hand, opponents to such initiatives have introduced counter-legislation like "Greenland Sovereignty Protection Act" (H.R. 7013 of January 2026) to protect Greenland's current international status and the partnership with Denmark.

¹⁷ Rajvanshi, A., (2025). "Trump Jr. visits Greenland and Danish King changes royal coat of arms amid feud over Arctic territory", *NBC News*, January 7. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/trump-jr-greenland-denmark-king-changes-royal-coat-arms-rcna186518>.

¹⁸ For the American perspective, see for example Svendsen, O., (2025). "Seizing Greenland is Worse Than a Bad Deal", Center for Strategic & International Studies, January 21. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/seizing-greenland-worse-bad-deal>; and Roy, D., and Masters, J., (2026). "The Trump Administration's Push for Greenland: What to Know", Council on Foreign Relations, January 22. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/articles/greenlands-independence-what-would-mean-us-interests>. For the European take, see Rahbek-Clemmensen, J., (2025). "U.S. Free Association with Greenland: A Bad Deal", *War on the Rocks*, January 9. Available at: <https://warontherocks.com/2025/01/u-s-free-association-with-greenland-a-bad-deal/>; and Paul, M., (2026). *America's Fixation on Greenland: Implications and Policy Options for Europe*, SWP Comment No. 8, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, February. Available at: <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2026C08/>.

if annexations happen forcefully). Add to this the perspective of ice melting due to accelerated climate change, and the planners will concentrate even more on the new, incoming routes, which could cross the Arctic Circle. This could allow the established actors in the region, i.e. Russia and the United States, or newcomers like China¹⁹, to add more options to their economic and military strategies of expansion and threat. In such a context, the United States may prove to be a source of strategic surprise, by evolving – under Trump's leadership – from a democratic, self-contained hegemon of the West into an emulator of its competitors from the East (i.e. Russia and China), for whom disregard for international law in their policies towards “near abroad” territories is common norm.

The renewed rivalry in the Arctic takes place in conjunction with the inner dynamics of the Republican establishment, characterised by the rise of Vice President J.D. Vance, formerly a fierce critic of Trump²⁰, and a new generation of MAGA politicians, which translates into almost no opposition to Trump from inside the traditional, moderate GOP²¹. Vance's expanded role includes the responsibility of dealing with key issues of American foreign and security policy, as reflected by his public positions starting with his controversial speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2025, soon after the start of his term. Yet, seconding Trump's global offensive agenda or taking it over with a view to the 2028 presidential elections is not an easy task. This was demonstrated by his unsuccessful visit²² to Greenland, where he faced strong local opposition, despite his efforts to emphasise respect and support for

¹⁹ Self-proclaimed “important stakeholder in Arctic affairs” and “near-Arctic state”, China is seeking a Polar dimension to its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, despite being located 1,400 km away from the Arctic Circle. The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (2018), *China's Arctic Policy*, January. Available at: https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm.

²⁰ For his past criticism of Trump, including labelling him a potential “America's Hitler”, see for instance McCarthy, M., (2024). “I'm a Never Trump guy”: All of J.D. Vance's Trump quotes that could come back to bite him”, *Politico*, July 15. Available at: <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/07/15/jd-vance-donald-trump-comments-00168450>.

²¹ See for example the rapid and unexpected downfall of one of Trump's staunchest loyalists (especially during the critical period of post-presidency impeachment), Marjorie Taylor Greene, due to her criticism of the foreign policy of Trump's second administration and the president's reduced interest in solving urgent socio-economic domestic issues (including the Epstein case). Zurcher, A., (2025). “How Greene went from MAGA loyalist to quitting the Congress”, BBC, November 22. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwywjz202r7o>.

²² According to public sources, the tour was scaled back from a multi-day, high-level trip to a visit to the American base on the island, done without an official invitation from Greenlandic or Danish authorities. Even his wife's scheduled cultural agenda with the “mistreated” Inuit ethnic majority was cancelled in order to avoid imminent protests. See the coverage by the conservative network Fox TV: Hayes, K., (2025). “Vance, wife redirect visit to US military base in Greenland after diplomatic spat”, LiveNOW from FOX, March 28. Available at: <https://www.livenowfox.com/news/vance-wife-to-greenland-trip-military-base-march-28-2025>; Phillips, M., (2025). “US accuses Denmark of treating Greenlanders as ‘second-class citizens’ during Vance visit to Arctic base”, *Fox News*, March 28. Available at: <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/us-accuses-denmark-treating-greenlanders-second-class-citizens-during-vance-visit-arctic-base>.

self-determination²³.

The Greenlandic pattern of devolution

Regardless of the Trump administration's rhetoric, Greenland is not a colony. Not since 1953, at least. It is an autonomous part of Denmark that chose to leave the European Economic Community (EEC), by its own free will. However, its citizens are not second-class citizens: i.e. they benefit from the extensive Danish welfare system, which according to international standards is by far superior to the American one.

A very distinct trait of the Greenlandic society is its communal sense of togetherness, as reflected by its traditions and stern responses²⁴ to Trump's vision of annexation. The island's habitat plays an important role in the community life that translates into a strong bond with nature and respect for the environment. Such a symbiotic and ecological approach explains the overall opposition to high-scale mining of Greenland's extensive resources, which have long attracted the controlling and investment interests of states and enterprises²⁵.

In terms of democracy, anti-corruption and rule of law, Greenland is no exception to the high standards specific to Scandinavian countries. Moreover, its devolution process from Denmark could be qualified as generating autonomy (with a view to independence) and not semi-autonomy²⁶ results and status. As a solid proof of this, the position of foreign affairs minister²⁷ (not usually devolved by central governments) is granted to a Greenlander. Moreover, Denmark respected the political will of the Greenlanders who voted to withdraw from the EEC in 1982²⁸. Additionally,

²³ Although there are signs of a more toned-down approach by Vance as compared to Trump's (verbal) rush to incorporate Greenland, the former is nonetheless bound by the same rhetoric of implied unilateralism and contempt towards European allies (and their interests and views) as the latter: "It's really important to our national security. There are sea lanes there that the Chinese use, that the Russians use, that frankly, **Denmark, which controls Greenland, it's not doing its job and it's not being a good ally...** So you have to ask yourself: How are we going to solve that problem, solve our own national security?... **If that means that we need to take more territorial interest in Greenland, that is what President Trump is going to do, because he doesn't care about what the Europeans scream at us.**" - see "Vance: Possibility US Acquires Greenland" sequence in Fox Business, (2025). "Vice President Vance opens up about potential 2028 presidential run: 'We'll see what happens'", February 3. Available at: <https://www.foxbusiness.com/video/6368203634112>.

²⁴ Burrows, E., Niemann, D., and Dazio, S., (2026). "Thousands march in Greenland to support Arctic island in the face of Trump's threats to take it over", *Associated Press*, January 18. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/denmark-greenland-us-trump-899d73348f2ee6c0cd2a8a6e6e136a90>.

²⁵ For a summary of Greenland's resource bonanza, including rare earth minerals and their potential impact on EU's Green Deal success, see TænkeTanken Europa, (2025). "The Green Transition: Are Greenland's Critical Raw Material deposits the key to the EU's net-zero future?", January 9. Available at: <https://think.europa.dk/brief/2025-01-the-green-transition-are-greenlands-critical-raw-material-deposits-the-key-to-the-eus>.

²⁶ The sources cited throughout this article usually describe the Greenlandic political regime as "semi-autonomous".

²⁷ See the visits made in early 2026 by Greenland's foreign affairs minister, Vivian Motzfeldt, together with Danish officials, to Washington DC and Brussels to discuss solutions to the US push to acquire the island. Shelton, J. with AFP, Reuters, (2026). "Greenland, Denmark say US talks positive but future unclear", *Deutsche Welle*, February 7. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/greenland-foreign-minister-vivian-motzfeldt-us-talks-trump-sovereignty/a-75857039>; European Commission| Audiovisual Portal, (2026). "Visit of Vivian Motzfeldt, Greenlandic Minister for Foreign Affairs and Research, and Troels Lund Poulsen, Danish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, to the European Commission", P-068767, January 19. Available at: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/media/photo/P-068767>.

²⁸ The referendum to leave the European Economic Community due to disputes regarding fishing rights took place in 1982 and the formal withdrawal happened in 1985.

some prerogatives of security policy (e.g. an increased role in home affairs enforcement, border management or security planning) have been transferred to the Greenlandic government²⁹.

Seeking independence could be considered the next logical step for Greenland, but Trump's intrusive position has brought forth a security dilemma attached to it and a sense of urgency. Denmark was Greenland's colonial power for many centuries. Nonetheless, in 1953 it put an end to its colony status, fully integrated the region and granted it autonomy in 1979 by referendum. Moreover, despite the non-binding character of the 2008 Greenlandic self-government referendum, the Danish authorities honoured their promise to accept its results and extend the devolved matters with the occasion of the 30 year-anniversary of Greenlandic home rule – providing a blueprint for what democracy represents beyond goodwill rhetoric. The Danish rule over the island has not come without bad practices³⁰, problems, controversies and contestations, but it does not bear comparison to the discrimination, abuse, violence and overall negative treatment that Native Americans and other minorities have suffered in the United States, for instance during the North American expansionist years. Ironically, given Trump's preference for favourable bits of history (usually taken out of context or misinterpreted), one could argue that, by historical right (if that were the norm instead of the present international law), Greenland could ask for ownership of parts of North America on grounds of the Viking discoveries of late 10th century-early 11th century³¹.

The Trump factor and the future of the European Union as a military alliance

In 454 BC, during the first Peloponnesian War, the Athenians decided to move the treasury of the Delian League from the temple of Apollo in Delos to Athens, by claiming they would protect it from the Persian threat. Thus, the appropriation of the treasury marked the League's slow transformation from an alliance of free, democratic city-states, into an alliance placed under the hegemony of Athens. 2,400 years later, on March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill's speech in the small, Midwestern town of

²⁹ See the contents and observe the comprehensive title of the first Greenlandic **foreign, security and defense** strategy approved exclusively by the local parliament in 2024: Government of Greenland | Ministry for Statehood and Foreign Affairs, (2024). *Greenland in the World: Nothing about us without us. Greenland's Foreign, Security and Defense Policy 2024-2033 – an Arctic Strategy*, February. See also Nielsen, R.L., and Strandsbjerg, J., (2024). "Nothing about us without us": What can we learn from Greenland's new 'Arctic Strategy' 2024-2033, Arctic Yearbook 2024, for counter-arguments to the strategy's over-reliance on US and Canadian cooperation to the detriment of a more balanced approach, which should include Denmark, other Scandinavian countries and the European Union as active alternatives.

³⁰ See the abusive experiments of social engineering and forced contraception done by Danish authorities against the Inuit children and women:

a. "Little Danes" (1951): Murray, A., (2022). "Denmark says sorry to children of failed experiment", BBC, March 9. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60646898>.

b. "Spiral Case" (1966-1975): Associated Press, (2025). "Denmark and Greenland apologize for painful legacy of forced Inuit contraception", August 27. Available at: <https://apnews.com/article/denmark-greenland-forced-contraception-inuit-apology-38f6770fe8c4064dc8cece7d9498b2f4>.

³¹ See the life and exploits of Leif Eriksson (Greenlandic/Icelandic discoverer of North America) in Shippey, T.A., (2021). "Leif Eriksson", EBSCO. Available at: <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/biography/leif-eriksson>. For a synthesis of Greenland's interactions with North America in the Middle Ages, see Seaver, K.A., (1996). *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the Exploration of North America, ca. A.D. 1000-1500*, Stanford University Press, Stanford. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/frozenechogreenl0000seav/mode/2up>.

Fulton, Missouri (chosen at the recommendation of the US Democrat President Harry Truman), introduced to the American and Western European audiences the concept of *Iron Curtain* and the existential threat posed by the Soviet Union. 70 years later, the same city would bring its small contribution to the overall presidential success of Trump, whose MAGA ticket was opposed to the mainstream Republican goals by promoting an *America first* approach. Soon, this success led to questioning the very existence of NATO, and triggered budgetary pressures on NATO allies as well as increased tariffs to counterbalance US over-expenditure for the security of Western Europe. With Trump's second term, an extra layer of ultimatums – concerning the acquisition/ annexation of Greenland and the possibility of imposing another financial burden of 25% in tariffs for the allies who would oppose it – was added.

It is undeniable that the United States played a major role in Western Europe's security (through NATO) and economic development (through the Marshall Plan) after the Second World War. Europe alone would not have been able to withstand the power of the Red Army and the appeal of Communism to its leftist electorate and could not have won the Cold War on its own. The European Economic Community was founded with America's financial support, political backing and military deterrent.

Yet, 75 years later, NATO, "the most successful alliance in history" is at a crossroads, and may vanish or become less relevant due to the Trump factor. One of the first people to analyse and forecast the dynamics of the *Transatlantic link* was Henry Kissinger, for whom Trump had a deep appreciation. Kissinger was both lucid and ironic about Western Europe's incapacity to act united as the United States, as long as it had no pressing stakes to attend to³². However, the current transformation of NATO into a Delian-like league, in which if you do not behave you risk the "fate" of Thasos³³, has finally got the Franco-German leadership of the European Union into the urgency of finding a viable alternative.

What started as a pilot project, designed to provide the nascent political union of the '90s with a security arm by rediscovering the Western European Union (a dormant alliance that helped create NATO), depended more or less on the French politics of restoring grandeur by EU means. The new Athens is right when claiming burden sharing, but taking over Greenland is the threshold of pressure that Denmark and its bigger European allies will not accept. The Greenlandic crisis could spur a new paradox to replace the classic NATO paradox³⁴ so feared by the Kremlin. Though Denmark opted out of EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), by claiming that NATO was a sufficient deterrent, now it could be well motivated to join the ranks of a potential EU military alliance, just like Sweden and Finland renounced their military non-alignment in the wake of Putin's special operation.

Nevertheless, the European Union does not have yet planning and operational

³² See Kissinger, H., (1965). *The Troubled Partnership: A Re-Appraisal of the Atlantic Alliance*, McGraw Hill, New York, and later iterations and revisions of the topic.

³³ Member of the Delian League who tried to rebel in order to protect its silver deposits, but was conquered and returned to the fold by Athens after a long and complicated siege (465-463 BC).

³⁴ That despite the fact that NATO still has a non-committal article V (due to the *Vandenberg Resolution*, meant to avoid the automatic entry of the United States into a new war of European making), the Warsaw Pact never had the grit to test it.

capabilities to match those of the United States, despite its superior numbers in aggregated population and treasury. It has a non-ambiguous mutual security clause when compared to NATO's "if it deems necessary" (to offer military assistance in case of aggression) of its famous article V. However, strategic autonomy is not achieved rhetorically. Therefore, in the last decade, the EU and its Member States have started to implement strategies that encompass institutional and policy solutions meant to position the European Union as a heavyweight entity, which cannot be treated like Melos. Take, for instance, the anti-coercion tool that enables Brussels to apply the "tit-for-tat" tactic in its relations with Washington DC in a mutually assured economic destruction for the sake of Greenland and not only.

Trump's critics use TACO³⁵ to deride him and his inconsistent foreign policy, but – similarly to Putin – Trump has demonstrated resilience, persistence and a strong drive for success, real or claimed as such. His eventual success in the Greenlandic "deal" depends on many factors, including the impact of other foreign affairs issues (like Venezuela, Iran or Cuba), but especially on his endurance as president. Leaving aside the health problems, specific to his age, Trump should not be discarded as unable or unwilling to test again the limits of American constitutionalism by claiming the right to a third mandate. Such an extraordinary move could paradoxically be based on a Democratic precedent, set by president F.D. Roosevelt back in 1940, when the United States was not yet at war, but witnessed World War II unfolding its insecurity and tragedy. The world-record broker of peace deals³⁶, as he likes to call himself with a view to a Nobel Peace Prize, could claim that America is at war with rogue states, sponsors of terrorism, or could suddenly contradict his non-interventionist stance by surgically attacking old or new foes³⁷.

It would be important to know the content of the deal that NATO Secretary General, Mark Rutte, made with Trump in order to alleviate the political debris of his ultimatum on Greenland. Strangely enough, this is not the legal role and mandate of a NATO Secretary General³⁸. Despite the usual prudence required by security affairs,

³⁵ TACO: Trump Always Chickens Out. For a counter-argument to TACO, see GUAC (Gaining Unmatched American Clout) in Bogden, G.E., (2026). "Forget TACO. It's GUAC that matters with Trump's tariffs: Those who mock Trump's tariff tactics are missing the secret sauce", *Washington Post*, January 29. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2026/01/29/trump-tariffs-taco-greenland-taiwan-china/>.

³⁶ For a critical update on Trump's brokered peace deals, see Jeyaretnam, M., (2025). "In Places Trump Has Touted Bringing Peace, Conflict Still Rages", *Time*, December 9. Available at: <https://time.com/7339536/trump-peace-deals-conflicts-status-thailand-cambodia/>.

³⁷ Challenging (or getting rid of) the 22nd Amendment to the US Constitution (1951) will not be an easy feat, but would not be atypical of a president/commander-in-chief so accustomed to legal circumvention and bending of Supreme Court's powers. For an analysis of Trump's options to go beyond the two-term limit on Presidency, like Putin, see Horley, T., and Versteeg, M., (2025). "How Donald Trump could overcome the 22nd Amendment and get a third term in 2028", *LSE United States Politics and Policy*, The London School of Economics and Political Science. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2025/11/11/how-donald-trump-could-overcome-the-22nd-amendment-and-get-a-third-term-in-2028/>. For Trump's usual teasing and manoeuvring of popular acceptance, also applied to this topic, see, for instance, his interview with NBC News and insistence that he was "not joking" about it: Welker, K., and Lebowitz, M., (2025). "Trump won't rule out seeking a third term in the White House, tells NBC News 'there are methods' for doing so", *NBC News*, March 30. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-third-term-white-house-methods-rcna198752>.

³⁸ For an appraisal of Rutte's efforts to keep the US in NATO, in the context of the Greenlandic crisis, with the risk of alienating its EU members, see Jack, V., (2026). "Mark Rutte is on collision course with European capitals over NATO", *Politico*, January 27. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/mark-rutte-donald-trump-flattery-nato/>.

public diplomacy standards that characterise democracies should apply to the acts of the former Dutch prime minister as well, when taking into consideration Greenland, which is part of NATO. Beyond that, we can only assume that the already existing US rights of access to Greenland³⁹ will be upheld and the joint allied necessity for higher security presence in the Arctic will be upgraded. The extraterritoriality of the British bases in Cyprus could serve as an example, but this should be coupled with a dual role as NATO facilities for the new bases to be created in Greenland.

If such ad-hoc deals do not hold, the higher risk will be to invite anarchy once more at global level. If Trump were to pressurise Greenland and Denmark into submission, that will equate with legitimising special (military) operations worldwide, including in Taiwan or Russian 'near abroad' beyond Ukraine, for "the able and willing".

Conclusions⁴⁰

The Greenlandic crisis started by Trump, in the context of renewed great power competition in the Arctic, causes unnecessary tensions and potential rupture within NATO and rifts between the United States and the European Union. The Donroe doctrine⁴¹ – acclaimed by the MAGA wing of the Republican Party, its media and think-tank backers – applied to Greenland does not differ much from Putin's claims of historical and national security reasons that justify the takeover of territories and population, regardless of the international law and the will of the local population.

The end of NATO or its fall into desuetude should be avoided, but not at all costs. The United States has decisively contributed to Western Europe's development by providing, at low cost, a formidable security umbrella, which should have been long ago balanced in the financial books of such a strategic partnership. At the same time, the Trump administration is wrong when mentioning only costs and no benefits because NATO has facilitated American leadership within it and abroad, and implies massive economic benefits.

The European Union, long time seen only as an economic powerhouse, has finally met the urgency, both in the East and North-West, to accelerate its transformation into a complete power factor, including by the implementation of a military alliance status. If need be, the next advisable step should be the *reverse containment* in order to tackle the unwarranted MAGA-led American unilateralism.

As for Greenland, the Melos of our time, its options to salvage and develop its

³⁹ See the Avalon Project, (1951). *Defense of Greenland: Agreement Between the United States and the Kingdom of Denmark*, Yale Law School | Lillian Goldman Law Library, April 27. Available at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/den001.asp.

⁴⁰ For my overall take on US, EU, Russian and Chinese foreign and security policies, see the chapter "Foreign Policy Analysis" in Anglițoiu, G., Cercel, M.O., Duna, D., Butnaru-Troncotă, M., (2025). *Teme pedagogice de Relații Internaționale (Themes in International Relations)*, Comunicare.ro, Bucharest.

⁴¹ The Monroe doctrine with Donald-esque pennant - see for instance Lt. Col. Maginnis, R., (2026). "The Donroe Doctrine: Trump is rewriting power politics to put America First: National security documents reveal hard-edged approach combining Iran strikes, NATO demands and Indo-Pacific focus", *Fox News*, February 3. Available at: <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/donroe-doctrine-trump-rewriting-power-politics-put-america-first>; Roberts, K.D., (2025). "A Foreign Policy for America's Golden Age", *The Heritage Foundation*, July 10. Available at: <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/foreign-policy-americas-golden-age>.

green democracy depend very much on the dynamics of the competition for resources and transportation corridors in the Arctic. On the one hand, Greenland cannot expect much from the United States, Russia and China, and on the other hand it might moderate its original drive to distance itself as much as possible from Danish and EU rule, since it is obvious that only the European Union⁴² respected, both in rhetoric and action, its status as a self-determined political entity. Choosing between the current status-quo, independence, Puerto Rico-like unincorporated status, and full membership in the US Federation will potentially affect the Greenlandic political life⁴³, but should nonetheless be done democratically and wisely.

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⁴² As reflected by the EU officials' clear message, Greenland as Danish "overseas territory" is covered by EU's mutual assistance clause (Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty). See Paternoster, T., and Schumann, N., (2026). "Fact check: Can the EU defend Greenland in a US attack?", *Euronews*, January 14. Available at: <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2026/01/14/fact-check-can-the-eu-defend-greenland-in-a-us-attack>.

⁴³ The Greenlandic coalition government is already experiencing problems of cohesion and unity, while trying to navigate with a good compass the narrow channel of geostrategic options. See the resignation of its charismatic foreign minister in the wake of a coalition dispute - Milne, R., (2026). "Greenland's foreign minister resigns amid tensions with US", *Financial Times*, March 13. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/473cd529-bf81-4a08-b31c-b064f4f0fc73>.

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