

President Trump, Hemispheric Security and the Greenland Connection

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President Trump, Hemispheric Security and the Greenland Connection

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In December 2024, President elect Donald Trump posted the following on social media platform *Truth Social*:

“For purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the world, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity.”¹

In a series of Christmas Day observations, Trump reflected on a potential purchase of Greenland, taking back control of the Panama Canal and encouraging Canada to become the 51st state of the United States. On the face of it, the *Truth Social* posts may appear both whimsical and utterly in keeping with a former president who takes pleasure in being a “disrupter in chief”. The offer to purchase Greenland rejuvenates an earlier comment in 2019, which at the time provoked the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen to describe it as “an absurd discussion”.² As a direct response to that rebuff, Trump withdrew his acceptance of a state visit to Denmark, even though the Danish leader was at pains to reinforce the importance of the Danish-US relationship, including shared security concerns in Greenland.

But as with other foreign economic and security matters, this second term president has a way of framing issues that captures the attention of others. While it might seem a little random to link the Panama Canal, Greenland and Canada together - there is a certain underpinning geopolitical logic to it all. The Panama Canal, opened in 1914, is struggling with drought and has experienced a drop in vessel transits. Users have complained about delays and restrictions. Trump has accused the Panamanian government of “ripping off” US operators, and even suggested Chinese military personnel might be stationed there. Panama has refuted all allegations; however, this does give rise to a rather troubling thought. Does Trump think (like Putin in the case of Crimea and the transfer to Ukraine from Russia in the 1950s) that the ending of the US-controlled Panama Canal Zone in 1979 was a monumental error which needs correcting? ³His January statement at a press conference in January 2025 was clear on the scale

1 — “Donald Trump President Elect Targets Canada, Greenland and Panama Canal in Christmas Message”, *Sky News*, Dec. 26, 2024.

2 — “Greenland Is Not for Sale: Trump’s Talk of a Purchase Draws Derision”, *The New York Times*, Aug. 16, 2019.

3 — Mike Wendling, “Panama’s president calls Trump’s Chinese canal claim ‘nonsense’”, *BBC News*, Dec. 26, 2024.

of the error itself.⁴ Trump has also complained in the past that Canada is not spending adequately on national security and defence. Canada is not the only NATO partner to be targeted for such criticism, however. Canada like Denmark has in Trump's words been "delinquent" when it comes to committing at least 2% of their GDP to defence spending.

Taken together, therefore, it is perfectly possible to form a view that a strategic waterway (the Panama Canal) might become less reliable over time and that alternative options in and around the Arctic are going to become increasingly significant. As former National Security adviser to the first Trump administration Robert O'Brien explained on Fox News in December 2024, Greenland is "a highway from the Arctic all the way to North America".⁵ O'Brien also speculated that a second Trump administration would expect to leverage further economic and resource advantage if it had to step in to "defend" Greenland from third parties such as China. As O'Brien warming to his theme of Greenland's strategic significance noted:

"The Danes need to put the frigate that's necessary there, they can put the air wings, they can put the missiles in Greenland, and they can put the infantry there that they need to defend [it].... If they don't want to do either of those things, they can let us buy Greenland, and Greenland can become part of Alaska. The native people of Greenland are very closely related to the people of Alaska."⁶

The Arctic region is vastly different to the one which Trump and his team might have been briefed on in January 2017 onwards. Five elements stand out in terms of what has changed between the first and second Trump administrations. The first is simply a return of President Trump's geopolitical project - "America First". Second, in a more Arctic-related context, the look and feel of Arctic governance has changed markedly during the Biden years. The third is the intensification of the strategic alliance between China and Russia, which has had some highly pertinent polar and more than polar dimensions. The penultimate is the dynamic and highly sensitive relationship between Denmark and Greenland, and whether Trump is right to suspect that there is a "deal" to be struck at some point, noting that the US has been an important security provider for Greenland and Denmark since 1951. And finally, the strategic and resource importance of Greenland has grown, and new actors such as Elon Musk's Starlink are arguably helping to make the world's largest island better connected to the wider world.

Trump and hemispheric security

The first Trump administration focused on three main areas when it came to the pursuit of US strategic interests - energy dominance, confronting the geo-economic and geopolitical challenge of China and chiding NATO allies for not spending adequately on defence and security. As many observers have noted, the first administration was also typified by both unpredictability and brinkmanship that meant the US reversed earlier commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the Open Skies Treaty in pursuit of a more general commitment

4 — Donald Trump, Press Conference, Jan. 7, 2025.

5 — Sarah Fortinsky, "Former Trump adviser: If Denmark can't defend Greenland, let US buy it to 'become part of Alaska'", *The Hill*, Dec. 29, 2024.

6 — Ryan King, "Ex-Trump national security adviser says Denmark needs more than dog sleds to defend Greenland as prez-elect eyes territory", *The New York Post*, Dec. 29, 2024.

to put “America First”.⁷ As Trump returns to the White House, it is highly likely that specific regions such as the Arctic are caught up in a wider matrix of concerns that the US finds itself in a world where China, Russia and a host of other countries such as Iran, North Korea, Brazil and South Africa are working with one another on a range of trade, resource and security projects. It is worth recalling that China, Indonesia and Brazil are major producers and refiners of critical minerals such as cobalt, nickel and lithium.

When Trump speaks of acquiring Greenland, renaming the Gulf of Mexico the “Gulf of America” and taking control of the Panama Canal, he speaks directly to a concern for hemispheric security.⁸ The underpinning of current and future US power, therefore, depends on maintaining energy dominance, investing in defence, and maintaining a bastion-like defence of the Western Hemisphere. Indeed, what the Greenland “purchase” offer reveals is fundamentally a fear that the US will not be able to contain China and its plans to increase its dominance in East Asia (including Taiwan) and beyond. If this comes to pass, however welcome, the US should not rely on smaller and weaker allies such as Denmark and Canada (and others such as Panama) to defend US/NATO interests. Trump has been blunt in his assessment of both, and will continue to be so in office. If all of this holds then it would seem “logical” that one would look again at the operational security of essential shipping lanes and maritime passages – the Northwest Passage, the Panama Canal, and further south, Drake’s Passage.

If some regional allies cannot be counted on – and have already been threatened economically – others, such as Five Eyes partners like Australia and the UK will take on added importance in terms of what they can offer in the European Arctic, West Pacific and South Atlantic. In the North American Arctic, Trump will inherit a position where the US’s position as a coastal state in the Arctic Ocean is unchallenged and despite not being a formal party to UNCLOS, the US has established what it believes to be its sovereign rights over the extended continental shelf of Alaska. The acquisition of Greenland may ultimately be more about ensuring that China does not gain a foothold in the North American Arctic. And doing so now seems all the timelier as China’s pursuit of great power remains undiminished. Trump will have been told that the Arctic is “melting” and that includes the Greenland ice sheet. And while there is no simple correlation between melting, access and exploitation, it will feed the view that others will seek to capitalise on this. Potential access to rare earth minerals in Greenland itself would seem to offer additional advantages given China’s decision from 2023 to restrict the export of such minerals in the face of growing trade tension with the US.⁹

What all of this means for the Arctic and Greenland specifically needs to be carefully teased out. A provocative reading of the Trump-Greenland saga is that this is simply what great powers do. Trump’s comments on Panama come at a time when there has been no shortage of recent Russian commentary reflecting on the “misguided” 1867 sale of Alaska. Some Putin apologists are calling for Alaska to be returned to the Russian Federation along with other territories including Finland and the Baltic States.¹⁰ The buying and selling of Arctic ter-

7 — Council on Foreign Relations, “[Trump’s Foreign Policy Moments 2017-2020](#)”.

8 — Donald Trump, Press Conference, Jan. 7, 2025.

9 — “[China’s trade embargo on critical minerals to the United States – A ripple effect of the new Trump Administration](#)”, *Herbert Smith Freehills*, Dec. 16, 2024.

10 — “[Putin wants Alaska back after ‘illegal’ sale to the US](#)”, *London Loves Business*, Dec. 30, 2024.

ritory has a long history in the 20th century with a Soviet mining company purchasing Barentsburg and Pyramiden from other European mining companies in the late 1920s. In the 21st century, Chinese investors twice tried to purchase privately held land in Svalbard.¹¹ Both attempts were blocked by Norway, the sovereign power, and other purchasing and investment projects involving Chinese companies have been blocked in Iceland and Finland. All of which is to note that while there is some furore around Trump and his offer to purchase Greenland, there has been a tradition of horse-trading territory in the Arctic.

The governments in Denmark and Greenland are going to be in a very difficult position for the foreseeable future. What Trump has done so far is something that President Putin would approve of. He has driven a wedge between NATO allies and even provoked France to publicly state that Greenland's borders will be defended if Trump proceeds with military action.¹² One immediate option for Greenland would be to ask to rejoin the European Union (EU) and seek some further measures of collective economic and political security. Copenhagen clearly does not have the scale of resources to match a rapacious US, which, as noted, is eager to ensure that an independent Greenland does not fall under the economic spell of China. Just as the Danish king is adjusting the Royal coat of arms, Donald Trump Junior is flying into Nuuk prior to the presidential inauguration. What could be more provocative than posing with his entourage in front of the statue of Greenland's original colonialist, the Danish-Norwegian missionary Hans Egede, in Nuuk?¹³

President Trump will not be overly concerned about upsetting Greenlandic and Danish political leaders. He may even hope to drive a wedge between "disaffected" Greenlanders and "resentful" Danes who contribute to that annual 500 million euro block grant to Greenland. "America First" as Trump might well retort.

Arctic governance after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine

In 2024, publications such as the *New Yorker*, *Spiked*, *Pulitzer Center*, *Forbes* and the *Economist* have all warned of escalation, conflict and crisis in the Arctic region. To take just one example, this time from the UK-based publication *Politico* - in September 2024, it circulated an article, "Russia 'fully ready' for Arctic war with NATO" and argued that "Russia is 'fully ready' for a conflict with NATO in the Arctic, the country's foreign minister warned."¹⁴ How did we get here?

It is a direct, if unintended consequence, of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Shortly after the invasion was launched, seven Arctic states (Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the United States) decided to "pause" the Arctic Council. Established in 1996, it is the leading intergovernmental forum for Arctic affairs with Russia, the largest Arctic state, as a key participant. Between February 2022 and May 2023, Arctic diplomacy and inter-state relationships were severely disrupted by the ramifications of the Ukrainian war. Although not directly related to the Arctic, the Russian

11 — "Norway blocks sale of last private land on Svalbard after Chinese interest", *The Guardian*, July 1, 2024.

12 — "France warns Trump over military threats to take control of Greenland", *Radio France International*, Jan. 1, 2025.

13 — Miranda Bryant, "Donald Trump Jr visits Greenland amid father's interest in owning island", *The Guardian*, Jan. 7, 2025.

14 — Seb Starcevic, "Russia 'fully ready' for Arctic war with NATO", *Politico*, Dec. 20, 2024.

Federation's decision to launch the full-scale invasion led to a dramatic and almost immediate breakdown of political trust. The invasion coincided with Russia's chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2021-2023), and partial dialogue and engagement with Russia did not resume until Norway took over the chairmanship in May 2023.

What this break in activity meant to many was the end of Arctic exceptionalism.¹⁵ An understanding of the Arctic as a zone for circumpolar cooperation in matters of common interest such as sustainable development and environmental protection with a shared belief that these common concerns would in turn keep divisive national security and defence issues at bay. From the outset, the Arctic Council purposefully excluded military and security affairs. Before the 2022 invasion, it is worth recalling that there were no outstanding territorial disputes in the Arctic. Where there were issues to be resolved, there was good evidence that the Arctic states were engaging well with established international legal frameworks such as the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS). One diplomatic high point was the agreement in 2010 between Norway and Russia over their mutual maritime boundary in the Barents Sea. Elsewhere, Canada, Denmark/Greenland and Russia have all been pursuing their own engagements with outer continental shelf delimitation. With the extension of those sovereign rights over the seabed of the Arctic Ocean as the ultimate goal, President-elect Trump has no doubt been informed that Russia is in a good position to extend, quite legitimately, those sovereign rights based on the formal "recommendations" of the UN body, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, in February 2023.¹⁶ But the final delimitation of the Russian continental shelf will have to wait until the Commission makes recommendations to both Canada and Greenland/Denmark, and then all three parties will have to negotiate with one another in order to finalise their mutual claims to the seabed. This process of intergovernmental diplomacy and negotiation is important because the Commission is only a scientific and technical body. It has no legal personality.

Despite Russia's formal commitment to the Law of the Sea Convention, one area of concern for the US came after the invasion and imposition of sanctions against Russia. In March 2024, a Russian representative to the International Seabed Authority, another UN body, announced that Moscow would not recognise the December 2023 US declaration of its extended continental shelf. As a non-party to UNCLOS, Russia argued that the US could not pick and choose which elements of UNCLOS it would endorse as customary international law. The ECS declaration included details for Alaska and although it does not overlap with Russia's Arctic continental shelf, the decision to publicly reject the US's position comes at a time when there have been calls within Russia for Moscow to abandon UNCLOS. While Russia has also urged the US to adopt UNCLOS via its Senate, the longer Washington fails to formally ratify, the more Moscow can point to US double standards when it comes to engaging with international legal frameworks.¹⁷

Arctic governance is at a crossroads. When Norway took over the chairmanship

15 — Lisa Murkowski, "[Can the Arctic's unique distinction as a zone of peace be maintained?](#)" "The Arctic Senator" explains what it will take", *American Foreign Service Association*, May 2021.

16 — Bjørn Kunoy, "[Recommendations on the Russian Federation's Proposed Outer Continental Shelf in the Arctic Area](#)", *Ejil:Talk!*, March 3, 2023.

17 — Andrey Todorov, "[Russia's Reaction to the US Continental Shelf Announcement: Political Posturing or Setting the Stage for a Big Move?](#)", *The Arctic Institute*, April 9, 2024.

of the Arctic Council in May 2023, it insisted that parties will have to find ways of ensuring that the cessation of political dialogue did not lead to complete breakdown of relations between Russia and the other seven Arctic states (A7). The cessation of the so-called Senior Arctic Officials-level meetings was felt keenly, because that provided a regular platform for high-level political engagement with all eight Arctic states. As a countermeasure, Norway organised multiple events to engage with Russian representatives, Indigenous Peoples and observers to the Arctic Council including European and Asian states such as Germany, China and the UK. Annual conferences such as Arctic Assembly and Arctic Frontiers have taken on an exaggerated importance, in the absence of political level meetings with Russia. What 2024 revealed more generally is a more critical questioning of how international forums such as the Arctic Council work and whether its tripartite structure of Arctic state, permanent participants (Indigenous Peoples organisations) and Observers (both state and non-state) represented adequately the changing circumstances. In other words, the breakdown in the relationship with Russia at a political and diplomatic level offered a window of opportunity for others to mobilise alternative visions. In July 2024, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC, and a Permanent Participant) issued a statement calling on all parties to safeguard the Arctic Council, their recommendations for positive action included the following:

“Replace tokenism with full and effective participation and meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples throughout the Arctic Council”

Having one or two ‘token’ Indigenous experts involved in a predominantly Western scientific process is not working. In one working group, for example, after four years of commitment and participation, two Indigenous experts ended their participation because their views and knowledge were consistently ignored.¹⁸

In effect, the statement and recommendations argue that there is an opportunity for a re-set of the Arctic Council following the impasse with Russia, and that change is necessary to fulfil its original ambition. The observation above about a working group is particularly poignant because hitherto the Arctic Council’s advocates would have lionised the achievements and prevailing culture of engagement within the six main scientific working groups.¹⁹

If the ICC were adept enough to realise that one should never waste a crisis - so was Russia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has argued that what is needed in the post-2022 era is a “civilised dialogue” about the future Arctic. In May 2023, Lavrov made a video speech in the concluding stage of the Federation’s chair-ship of the Arctic Council (2021-2023) where he posited that future effective work would depend on all parties “continuing a civilised dialogue to preserve the Arctic as a territory of peace, stability and constructive cooperation”.²⁰ He argued that the hiatus affecting the Arctic Council was entirely due to other Arctic states over-reacting to the “situation in Ukraine” and

18 — “Inuit Circumpolar Council Position Paper – Safeguarding and Strengthening the Arctic Council”, *Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada*, July 15, 2024.

19 — The six working groups are: Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response, Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment, Sustainable Development Working Group and Arctic Contaminants Action Program.

20 — Astri Edvardsen, “Lavrov: ‘The Arctic Council’s Future Depends on Whether a Civilized Dialogue Can Continue’”, *High North News*, May 15, 2023.

rushing to politicise Arctic Council business. Russia's then Arctic ambassador, Nikolay Korchunov, doubled down on this approach which appeared to place the blame on the other Arctic states for using the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine as an opportunity to suspend the "normal" workings of the Council.²¹ What became clear from the Russian reaction was that Moscow placed fresh pressure on the incoming chair Norway to restore the Arctic Council by May 2025. If that failed to materialise then Moscow reserved the right to develop alternative opportunities with third parties, especially BRICS. A decision fundamentally taken post-2014 after the EU and US imposed sanctions following the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Russia has been very critical of how the other Arctic states were swift to use the aftermath of the "special military operation" as an opportunity to sever political engagement with Russia and the Arctic Council. Lavrov has been blunt in his assessment about where the blame lies for the current malaise - exacerbated by the fact that Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024) are now members of NATO. As he noted in an interview published by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 2024:

"In practice, however, our NATO colleagues increasingly often turn their eyes to the Arctic Region (this began long before the special military operation), declaring that the North Atlantic alliance also has interests over there for reason of its geographical location. They claim that Norway has been a member of NATO since its inception and therefore they also need to keep an eye on developments in the region. Currently, this attitude manifests itself in other regions as well. The bloc's claims that they are allegedly a purely defensive alliance concerned solely with defending the territory of member-countries come straight from the devil".²²

While Lavrov did not define "civilised dialogue", it would seem reasonable to conclude that it would include Moscow's list of so-called "friendly countries" - allies and neutrals who have not publicly criticised Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.²³ In the post-Crimea era, there has been a concerted attempt to develop a network of "connector countries" who are willing to do economic and diplomatic business with the Russian Federation - ushering in a new era of "swing geopolitics".²⁴ These countries have helped Russia bypass some of the direct effects of sanctions and public opprobrium. And importantly, contributed in part to Moscow's determination to normalise the annexation and illegal invasion. At an end of year press conference in Moscow, a BBC report in December 2024 noted that "Putin appeared in front of a large blue screen emblazoned with a map of the Russian Federation, complete with annexed parts of Ukraine."²⁵ Arctic states appreciate that there is no prospect of Russia giving up the annexed territories of Crimea and anything captured and occupied in eastern Ukraine. Whatever the outcome of the Ukrainian conflict, and the damage done to Russia, there will be more than a lingering suspicion that Russia

21 — Astri Edvardson, "Russia's Top Arctic Diplomat: Long-Term Cooperation in the Arctic Requires Conditions Now Lost", *High North News*, May 5, 2023.

22 — Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "[Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview for the Soviet Breakthrough semi-documentary series project](#)", Sep. 19, 2024.

23 — "[Russia issues list of friendly and neutral countries](#)", *Intellinews*, Sep. 24, 2023.

24 — Jared Cohen, "[The rise of geopolitical swing states](#)", Goldman Sachs, May 15, 2023.

25 — Tom Bennett, "[I should have invaded Ukraine earlier, Putin tells Russians in TV marathon](#)", *BBC*, Dec. 19, 2024.

could aim its military forces/” little green men” somewhere else in the wider Baltic-Arctic region.

This post-invasion malaise has also affected regional organizations beyond the Arctic Council. In September 2023, Russia announced its withdrawal from the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC).²⁶ Established in 1993, the BEAC played an important role in cultivating cross-border collaboration on matters of shared importance including education, Indigenous peoples’ collaboration, cultural exchange and business engagement. Typically, the Russian statement announcing their disengagement blamed the other partners including Finland, Denmark, Norway and the EU for the breakdown in relationships. Russia will pursue a “civilised dialogue” with others. What is likely to happen is that Russia will seek to intensify those relationships with BRICS plus partners. Russia’s plan to create the equivalent opportunity - a science complex - for BRICS+ partners in the Pyramiden in Svalbard is just one illustration of this strategy.²⁷ This development is anticipated to further restrict access to the Russian Arctic for Western scientists eager to continue work with opposite numbers on the longer-term environmental monitoring and information-sharing with the Russian half of the Arctic region.

This is the complex and intricate context in which President Trump’s second administration will have to contend with. He probably does not care about the Arctic Council. And even for those who do care about the Council, the reality is that defence and security matters are “trumping” science, environmental protection and sustainable development. For European NATO partners, the coming weeks and months is likely to bring fresh challenges in an arc of potential crisis stretching from Svalbard in the high North to the North Atlantic and Baltic Sea region. Reports have recently emerged of a series of incidents ranging from subsea cabling sabotage and air zone violations to GPS jamming and fishing clashes. Offshore energy infrastructures might yet also be subjected to aggressive third-party interference soon. Russia is doubling down on its framing of “unfriendly states”, most of whom include the original members of the Arctic Council. The Commander in Chief of the Russian Navy, Admiral Aleksandr Moiseev noted in December 2024, “In addition to political and economic measures to contain Russia in the Arctic, unfriendly states are increasing their military presence in the region...The military-political situation in the region is characterised by an increase in conflict potential associated with the intensification of rivalry between leading states for access to the resources of the Arctic Ocean, as well as the establishment of control over strategic sea and air communications”.²⁸ The Admiral’s comments, notably, failed to reflect on how and why Russia might have contributed to this conflict potential and rivalry.

The China-Russia Polar Connection

China considers itself to be a polar power. In 2013, it was recognised as a state observer to the Arctic Council alongside other Asian states such as Japan and South Korea. Since 2018, Beijing has defined itself as a “near-Arctic” state which at the time drew the ire of former Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. In May

26 — Astri Edvardsen, “Russia withdraws from the Barents Cooperation”, *High North News*, Sep. 29, 2023.

27 — Mathieu Boulégué and Klaus Dodds, “Antarctic Diplomacy in a BRICS+ World”, *Polar Points*, July 3, 2024.

28 — Thomas Nilsen, “Confrontation is unfolding in the Arctic, says Navy Commander”, *The Barents Observer*, Dec. 13, 2024.

2019, Pompeo publicly rejected this framing and was clear that the Trump administration was prepared to ‘fortify America’s presence’ in the Arctic region.²⁹ At the time, concerns were expressed that Greenland might be vulnerable to mounting Chinese interest in the island. In June 2019, the Chinese company China Communications Construction Company withdrew its bid to invest and develop two Greenlandic airports.³⁰ In 2024, Nuuk airport’s extended runway was inaugurated and in alliance with investment in a new airport terminal, can now welcome direct transatlantic flights from the US and Europe. In January 2025, that extended runway allowed Donald Trump Junior and party to fly on the Trump jet and make an impromptu visit to Nuuk. Importantly, this project was funded through a loan agreement with the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and thereby ensuring independence from Chinese loans and investment. The expectation is that NIB funding will enable the modernization of two other airports on the island by 2026.³¹ United Airlines expects to launch a new direct service from Newark in June 2025.

The timing and significance of this airport investment cannot be overstated. While Chinese investment in Greenlandic infrastructure was blocked by both Copenhagen and Washington DC, China continues to play a pivotal role as an investor and a connector in Russia. In the post-annexation of Crimea era, there has been a concerted attempt to develop a network of “connector countries” who are willing to do economic and diplomatic business with the Russian Federation - ushering in a new era of “swing geopolitics”.³² China has emerged as a major investor in Russian energy and shipping projects in the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF). Under the banner of a “no limits” friendship, this relationship between Moscow and Beijing existed before the illegal annexation of Crimea. Starting in 2013, the China National Petroleum Corporation purchased 20% of the Russian Yamal LNG processing project. The strategic shift in focus Moscow was a logical progression after earlier Chinese investment overtures in Canada, Greenland and Nordic countries either failed or were blocked on national security grounds. In 2017, the Chinese mining company General Nice Group abandoned its plans to purchase a disused naval base in Greenland after Denmark and the US cited national security concerns.³³

China’s investment plans in Russia acquired heightened importance as sanctions against Russia mounted. As Nordic countries and Canada became more wary of China’s northern investment ambitions, Russia became more accommodating. In response to the sanctions imposed by the US and the EU, China has had to tread a careful line between ensuring that those investment opportunities deliver economic dividends – such as discounted natural gas and access to shipping lanes – while not creating further friction with the US. China has been engaged in a series of covert activities designed to circumvent sanctions, and there is every indication that Chinese engagement with projects such as LNG 2 will continue. China has also worked with Russia in other ways. In July 2024, both countries conducted joint aerial exercises in the Alaska Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). It is the first time that China and Russia have operated a joint air patrol close to Alaska and in 2023 the two countries

29 — Blake Hounshell, “Pompeo aims to counter China’s ambitions in the Arctic”, *Politico*, May 6, 2019.

30 — “China withdraws bid for Greenland airport projects: Sermitsiaq newspaper”, *Reuters*, June 4, 2019.

31 — Nordic Investment Bank, “A new gateway to Greenland”, Dec. 12, 2024.

32 — Jared Cohen, “The rise of geopolitical swing states”, Goldman Sachs, May 15, 2023.

33 — Erik Matzen, “Denmark spurned Chinese offer for Greenland base over security - sources”, *Reuters*, April 7, 2017.

also conducted naval patrols again off the coastline of Alaska.³⁴

China is well on its way to be rightly considered a “great polar power”. In October 2024, Beijing announced that its coastguard had entered the Arctic Ocean for the first time.³⁵ With a growing scientific reputation for polar research and a polar infrastructure that now includes three fully functional icebreakers. A fourth icebreaker ship will be unveiled in 2025 or 2026, and in December 2024 China took receipt of a new deep-sea multi-functional research and archaeological vessel called *Tan Suo San Haow*.³⁶ China’s distant water fishing fleet is the largest in the world, and it is likely to be one of the first to explore the potential for fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean. The Arctic, in Chinese-language commentary, is framed as a “strategic frontier” – rather than a region composed of indigenous homelands and eight Arctic states. China will continue to be a major investor in Russian energy and infrastructure projects and has worked with Arctic parties to create regional entities, such as the China-Russia Arctic Forum. A major strategic dilemma for an economically weakened Russia is how to cultivate those ties with BRICS partners and neighbouring Asian countries without nourishing a long-standing geopolitical anxiety about the vulnerability of thinly populated spaces in Siberia and the Russian Far East. Russia’s economic and geopolitical pivot to the east and south, while strategically understandable, will inevitably shape the country’s capacity to negotiate and manage a range of external stakeholders.

In Beijing’s quest for great polar power, what is not clear is whether Russia’s desire for a “civilized dialogue” remains possible if China’s economic and maritime trading ambitions cross Russian red lines. One would be to continue to regard large areas of the Arctic Ocean as a global common or strategic frontier. China’s framing of the Arctic region as a “global common” will cause friction with Russia. It could potentially lead to a breakdown in that partnership in the future, especially if there are renewed concerns about China’s economic grip on the AZRF tightening. However warm Putin and Xi might be in the current era, the reality remains that Putin and others in Moscow are deeply perturbed by the spectre of long-term decay brought on by population decline, with mounting expense made worse by worsening ecological disruptions such as immense wildfires and permafrost thawing. Elsewhere, Russia’s international borders are framed more as “frontiers” that can be expanded upon as new strategic opportunities arise. For now, the focus is on Ukraine but tomorrow, it could shift to the Baltic States, Finland, Norway, and other areas of the former Soviet Union.

Denmark, Greenland and the United States

In June 2020, the prominent statue of the Danish-Norwegian missionary and settler coloniser, Hans Egede (1686-1758) was vandalised by protesters in the Greenlandic capital of Nuuk. Red paint was splattered across the statue and the base and ‘decolonize’ was written with white paint. The incident itself occurred on Greenland’s National Day, 21 June. The National Day was first celebrated in 1983, but 2020 was the first time the prominent statue, erected in 1921, had

34 — Heather Williams, Kari A. Bingen, and Lachlan MacKenzie, “Why Did China and Russia Stage a Joint Bomber Exercise near Alaska?”, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, July 30, 2024.

35 — “China Coast Guard Claims its First Patrol to the Arctic Ocean”, *The Maritime Executive*, Oct. 2, 2024.

36 — “China’s first comprehensive scientific research ship designed for global deep-sea exploration with manned deep-diving capabilities in ice areas sets sail”, *Global Times*, Dec. 26, 2024.

been targeted in such a direct manner. The red stain on the statue is a reminder of how anti-colonial political sentiment is informing island's contemporary political culture. Young people in Greenland share more of an affinity with Norway than metropolitan Copenhagen and Danish mores. Nuuk's residents are divided over the statue, but whatever happens to it a younger generation is determined that Greenland's relationship with Denmark will be 'decolonized' at some point. It is worth remembering that it was only quite recently that young people could finish their schooling in Greenland rather than being sent to high schools in Denmark. All of which made the January 2025 image of Donald Trump Jr. standing in front of that very statue all rather unsettling.

But the defaced statue of Hans Egede is also a reminder that the Greenlandic people are intimately aware of the geopolitical calculations of others. A year earlier, as noted, Greenland was a front-page news story when former President Donald Trump made some remarks about purchasing the largest island in the world. It was not the first time the US had offered to take ownership. In 1946 President Harry Truman reportedly offered \$100 million in gold. The rationale for the offer was straightforwardly economic and geostrategic. In 1946, Denmark declined Truman's offer. This year, the Prime Minister of Denmark, Mette Frederiksen, very publicly rejected Trump's offer. Notably, in 2019, the Government of Greenland also rejected the presidential approach. A reminder that Greenland is a very different place to the one that Truman and his advisors might have thought they knew as an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier'.

In 2009, following a landmark referendum, Greenlandic replaced Danish as the official language. The Greenlandic people can at any point henceforth pursue independence if they wish, subject to a further referendum. The Government of Greenland now maintains representatives in several European capitals as well as Washington DC. Independence is not an immediate priority for most of the 56,000 residents but the country's voters understand there is considerable interest in the island's resources, fish, shrimps, and minerals such as uranium, rubies, and rare earths. In the 2021 Greenlandic elections, the winning party, the democratic-socialist Inuit Ataqatigiit party, ran on a mandate to stop a controversial mining project to the south of the country. Mining remains divisive: while some see mineral extraction – including possible offshore oil and gas drilling – as integral to future independence others are worried that the environmental costs are too high for a country that also wishes to promote itself on the global stage as a destination for wilderness tourism. For now, financially speaking, the so-called annual block grant (worth about 530 million Euros) from the Danish government provides funding for civic governance and public services such as education, health, and welfare.

In February 2024, the government published a foreign, security and defence policy. The policy is entitled "Greenland in the World: Nothing about us without us" and expresses clearly Greenlandic aspirations and expectations about genuine consultation and engagement. It also reinforces a long-term demand to secure ever greater scope to operate independently of Copenhagen. Geographically speaking, Denmark would not be an Arctic state without Greenland. As part of the devolution arrangements within the Kingdom of Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands now have scope under so-called "authorisation agreements" to engage in foreign policy matters, where the implications of any such agreements are primarily focused on those specific parts of the Danish Kingdom. Denmark, however, retains general powers to conduct foreign and security policy over the Kingdom as a whole. Greenlandic politicians have, in the last few years, been increasingly assertive about challenging the constitutional straitjacket that many in Nuuk feel Greenland is subject to.

The 2024 strategy also made some significant observations about defence.

Following the Ukrainian invasion in 2022, Greenland's political leaders expressed their support for sanctions against Moscow. While previous Greenlandic governments had expressed reservations about further militarisation of the island (a point that has been used by previous Danish governments to justify their relatively modest investment in Arctic military capabilities), in the post-invasion context there was a public recognition that further investment in security and surveillance was necessary. The strategy notes that "Greenland will continue to cooperate with the defense authorities of Denmark and the United States, partially in the most beneficial way to maintain a military presence and installations in Greenland."³⁷ The strategy also proposes the establishment of a new political forum called the Arctic North American Forum and speaks about the need for greater engagement with Alaska and Arctic Canada in general. Notably, the European Union is barely mentioned. All of which, the strategy notes repeatedly, should be carried out with attention being given to how any enhanced military and economic presence could benefit the Greenlandic people.

While the current Greenlandic Prime Minister Múte Egede has made it clear that Greenland is not "for sale", the relationship with Copenhagen is challenging. Language, culture, and the status of the Royal Family could become sources of friction in the future. While the royal family is popular, there are signs that Greenland's youth are not quite as enamoured with them as older residents.³⁸ In May 2023, moreover, it was widely reported that Greenlandic MP Aki-Matilda Hoegh-Dam refused to speak Danish during a debate in the national parliament in Copenhagen, causing outrage in Copenhagen. A year earlier, the US Embassy in Copenhagen had issued a funding call for research on "Identifying Disinformation Symposium in Greenland". This could be seen as a prescient reminder that social divisions within the Danish Kingdom could attract disinformation campaigns from hostile third parties.³⁹ The Greenlandic language has made it harder for others to infiltrate a Greenlandic social media interaction on Facebook, but a 2024 study concluded that this could change rapidly with improved AI language models. Greenland's relationship with Denmark was the most likely issues for malicious actors in the future to exploit given historical grievances such as the forced assimilation of Greenlandic children in the 1950s, and current work on a draft constitution for Greenland.⁴⁰

In December 2024, the Danish government confirmed a new defence package for Greenland worth \$1.5 billion.⁴¹ Part of the investment will be spent on upgrading the Arctic Command in Nuuk as well as purchasing new equipment – including drones. While the Danish government was keen to emphasise that President Trump's message was a coincidence of timing, it nonetheless did bring to the fore a public recognition that Copenhagen's historic investment in defence had been too low. The current Danish government has been at pains to express not only their solidarity with the people of Ukraine but also to underscore how the security situation has deteriorated in the Baltic Sea, Ukraine, and the Arctic region. In November 2024, the Danish Defence Minister visited

37 — Helle Nørrelund Sørensen, "Arktisk strategi: Tættere samarbejde med Nordamerika og mere stabil fred i Arktis", *Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation*, Feb. 21, 2024.

38 — Linda Hall, "Tense Denmark-Greenland relations", *Euroweekly News*, Jan. 20, 2024.

39 — Funds for NGOs, "U.S. Embassy: Identifying Disinformation Symposium in Greenland".

40 — Morten Okkels, "Ingen tegn på udenlandske løgnkampagner i grønlandsk Facebook-debat", *Sermitsiaq*, Dec. 9, 2024.

41 — Robert Greenall and Paul Kirby, "Denmark boosts Greenland defence after Trump repeats desire for US control", *BBC*, Dec. 24, 2024.

Greenland and held talks again with their Greenlandic opposite number about matters of mutual interest.⁴²

Trump's messaging about "purchasing" Greenland came at a moment when Denmark and Greenland are still working out how to build a respectful relationship with one another. As Professor Ebbe Volquardsen at Ilisimatusarfik, the University of Greenland, reflected recently about how Denmark has seen itself as a benign albeit dominant partner:

"Greenland, the last remaining colony, was incorporated into the state as a formally equal county in 1953. Paradoxically, however, many Greenlanders experienced the following development as the real beginning of colonial rule: Danish Greenland policy in the post-war decades aimed to assimilate the indigenous population into a European way of life and, as it was sometimes said, to make them 'North Danes...'. Denmark's annual half-billion-dollar subsidy to Greenland's budget, which keeps the country dependent, has often been seen as an altruistic donation. In this way, Greenland's growing demands for autonomy and reparations for injustices during and after the colonial period have been interpreted in Denmark as a lack of gratitude, and many unpleasant discussions have thus been nipped in the bud".⁴³

How Nuuk and Copenhagen engage with Trump's America might reveal further evidence about the future of an island of 56,000 people – the vast majority of whom identify as Inuit. Greenland's 2024 strategy is clear that the island is part of the North American landmass and that there is a clear interest in ensuring good economic, cultural, and security relationships with nearby neighbours. While the strategy is clear that the people of Greenland desire a "low-tension" Arctic, it is appreciated that the world is now far more insecure than it was when The Arctic Policy of the Kingdom of Denmark (2011-2020) was released.⁴⁴ Greenlanders in particular acknowledge that there is now a great deal more interest in their island, as others spoke and wrote about Arctic "flashpoints" and "scrambles for territory and resources".

In 2023, it was reported that a Greenlandic diplomat travelled with the Danish delegation to NATO headquarters in Brussels.⁴⁵ As Greenland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Business and Trade Vivian Motzfeldt noted at the time "It is also important that NATO increases its understanding of the special conditions of our region and our society, and familiarizes itself with our interests, our values and priorities". The same year, the US agreed that the official name for the U.S. base in North Greenland should be changed from Thule Air Base to Pituffik Space Base. Beyond Greenland per se, the US led a military exercise called Northern Viking in the summer of 2024 (with Iceland and other NATO partners including Denmark and Norway), which had the explicit objective to focus on defending the sea communication lines around the GIUK gap.⁴⁶All

42 — Eye on the Arctic, "[Denmark and Greenland to discuss Arctic defence cooperation amid global tensions](#)", *Radio Canada*, Nov. 22, 2024.

43 — Ebbe Volquardsen, "[Greenland, Denmark and the Colonial Legacy](#)", *Everything Changes*, Alps Swiss Alpine Museum, 2024.

44 — Kingdom of Denmark, [Strategy for the Arctic 2011–2020](#), August 2011.

45 — "[Greenland to Receive NATO Representation for First Time Ever](#)", *Al Manar TV*, Mar. 21, 2023.

46 — The imaginary line and naval choke point separating the Norwegian Sea and the North Sea from the Atlantic Ocean. The acronym stands for Greenland, Iceland and the United Kingdom.

Cf. Astri Edvardsen, "[Northern Viking: Practicing the Defense of Iceland and Sea Routes in the North](#)

of which underscores a key demand from the Government of Greenland that both Denmark and NATO engage directly with them, whether it concerns Greenland's onshore, offshore or outer space interests.

While the Trump administration might seek to flex further the 1951 Agreement, one possibility is for the US to demand additional rights and responsibilities for the mutual defence and security of the island. None of this would be out of step with this Agreement that in turn has been amended over the intervening period (1951-onwards) – all of which will now be tempered by President Trump's apparent obsession with Greenland as a would-be integral part of the United States. US journalist Peter Baker coauthor of a book on the first Trump presidency called *The Divider* wrote that:

Mr. Trump later claimed the idea was his personal inspiration. "I said, 'Why don't we have that?'" he recalled in an interview last year for the book. "You take a look at a map. I'm a real estate developer. I look at a corner, I say, 'I've got to get that store for the building that I'm building,' etc. It's not that different." He added: "I love maps. And I always said: 'Look at the size of this. It's massive. That should be part of the United States.'" But in fact, Mr. Lauder discussed it with him from the early days of the presidency and offered himself as a back channel to the Danish government to negotiate. John R. Bolton, the national security adviser, assigned his aide Fiona Hill to assemble a small team to brainstorm ideas. They engaged in secret talks with Denmark's ambassador and produced an options memo.⁴⁷

Whatever the original inspiration, we can be confident that President Trump is likely to cause repeated upset to Copenhagen, as well as Nuuk. While Greenland may not be sold to the United States during the second administration (2025-2029), the appeal of further US investment and trade opportunities will be an attractive proposition in Nuuk. With the threat of tariffs against Denmark and the European Union already articulated even before Donald Trump assumed office, the worry any government in Greenland will have is becoming caught up in a whirlwind of great power politics. If Nuuk wants to move away from an over-reliance on the Danish block grant, the challenge would be to match or even exceed that current Danish commitment year on year. And what Trump and his team might do as part of "the art of the deal" is offer not only to match that "grant" – but exceed it substantially. What would happen if Trump offered the equivalent of 1 billion Euros per year?

The Geostrategic importance of Greenland

In any scenario, the next four to five years are going to be pivotal for Arctic geopolitics. Greenland is going to enjoy a top billing in all of this for several reasons. The first factor is simply the issue that will remain "live" regardless of what happens elsewhere in the Arctic region: the Greenlandic quest for independence. Danish-Greenlandic relations – whatever Trump does or says – will remain tense. Whilst most Greenlanders are in favour of independence, the stumbling block is wealth generation and a worry that any closer economic integration with the United States would create a new "colonial" relationship

⁴⁷ "Atlantic", *High North News*, Aug. 24, 2024.

47 – Peter Baker, "Cosmetics Billionaire Convinced Trump That the U.S. Should Buy Greenland", *The New York Times*, Sep. 14, 2022.

with Washington DC, rather than Copenhagen. Brussels is also interested in Greenland. In March 2024, the EU inaugurated a formal office in Nuuk and President Ursula von der Leyen said at the time:

“Our new office in Nuuk marks the beginning of a new era of the EU-Greenland partnership, with Europe’s concrete presence in Greenland and in the wider Arctic region. And with our two new agreements, we will invest in clean energy, critical raw materials and skills in Greenland. New jobs in Greenland, better security of supply for Europe; we can both benefit from greater cooperation in these areas”.⁴⁸

Greenland’s resource potential is a source of considerable interest, in particular minerals, including rare earths. The US has a strong interest in the sourcing and supply of 50 “critical minerals”, which are widely recognised as critical to green technologies such as electric cars and wind turbines, as well as the production of military weapons systems. China’s market dominance of rare earth supply chains is a source of concern for others, and both the US and EU are seeking to diversify sources and develop their own refining capabilities. US investors include high net worth individuals such as Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates through KoBold Metals and others such as Michael Bloomberg.⁴⁹ In Greenland, there are two active mines on the island with another five under development. Progress has been slow partly because of the difficult operating conditions but the most promising mine is Tanbreez, in the south of the island. It is expected to be operational in 2028.⁵⁰ It is widely touted as the largest mining project of its kind in the world and promises to offer a safe and secure supply for EU and North American consumers. Other minerals such as lead, zinc, uranium and iron ore have all been cited as commercially significant. Another mining project called Malmberg is due to go operational after Tanbreez. The EU Critical Raw Materials Act has set benchmarks for EU domestic capacity to be reached by 2030: 10% of the EU’s annual needs for extraction; 40% for processing and 25% for recycling.⁵¹ Greenland and Northern Europe have all been identified as critical areas of and for exploration and extraction. For the Government of Greenland, rare earths offer opportunities to diversify the island’s economy beyond fishing and tourism but local involvement in the mining labour market is very modest. Further development of mining projects would require the introduction of hundreds of foreign workers, and, in the past, there has been a preference to promote fishing and tourism instead.

The third element underpinning Greenland’s geostrategic position is accessibility. Ever since World War II, Greenland has attracted interest either as a stopover for trans-Atlantic flights and/or as a maritime highway linking the Arctic, Canada’s Northwest Passage and the North Atlantic via Baffin Bay. On the side of Greenland, the Greenland Sea would be the body of water that any vessel would pass through if it was travelling north towards the North Pole. Demand thus far has been modest compared to maritime traffic along Russia’s Northern Sea Route but there is a widespread expectation that activity will continue to grow. In 2024, Blue Water Shipping announced fresh investment

48 — European Commission, “President von der Leyen inaugurates the EU Office in Nuuk and signs cooperation agreements to strengthen the EU-Greenland Partnership”, Mar. 15, 2024.

49 — Kobold Metals, “Billionaire-backed mining firm to seek electric vehicle metals in Greenland”.

50 — “Critical Metals ups stake in world’s largest rare earths project to 42%”, *Mining.com*, July 23, 2024.

51 — European Commission, “Overview of the Critical Raw Materials Act”.

in port facilities in Nuuk to handle greater volumes of commercial cargo.⁵² US commentators and former advisers to President Trump have drawn attention to the importance of the island's offshore resource potential and proximity to areas of interest to the United States and other parties including China.

During the Cold War, Greenland became an integral part of military surveillance, particularly of Soviet (and later Russian) maritime and aerial activity. The Thule Air Base was also part of a ballistic missile early-warning system, which was designed to detect incoming Soviet missiles travelling across the Arctic Ocean and heading for North American targets. Greenland was considered ideal for such missile tracking – and later satellite tracking – because of its relative remoteness. In June 2024, the US military personnel stationed at Pituffik hosted the Danish King and Greenlandic Prime Minister. The US Commander Colonel Jason Terry outlined why the space station was strategically important:

“Pituffik Space Base also provides for NATO partners’ trans-shipment and resupply of isolated Danish and Canadian bases, and occasional long-distance flight training and critical emergency medical support to Northwestern Greenland, nearby sea-lanes and civilian overflying aircraft.”⁵³

The US's Arctic strategy, which was released by the Department of Defence in July 2024, places strong emphasis on how a challenging strategic environment will require ever greater engagement and collaboration with NATO partners. The strategy also acknowledges that there is a need to further invest and develop these monitoring capabilities over Greenland, ensuring better tracking of intercontinental ballistic missiles and low-Earth orbit satellites.⁵⁴

Finally, Greenland's internet connectivity and resilience will be a source of continued interest to the Trump administration. One reason for this is that access to Elon Musk's Starlink service is currently illegal in Greenland.⁵⁵ The reason for that is the Greenlandic Telecommunications Authority is committed to a model of shared costs for users, regardless of their location in the island. Starlink could in principle offer a reduction in costs and there is evidence that this satellite service is already being used in Greenland. The issue of internet connectivity and affordability is a sensitive one because the island's public internet provider, Tusass, enjoys a commercial monopoly. This is now being challenged as news stories have quoted Greenlandic sources who have made the case for allowing Starlink and other service providers to offer their services. Alternatively, there have been warnings that any dependency on Starlink could compromise Greenlandic autonomy (and the privileged operational position of Tusass) even if it offers better connectivity in more remote areas. In 2023, Tusass confirmed that it was upgrading ground station infrastructure at two sites in Ittoqqortoormiit and Tasiilaq to support the new GreenSAT GEO satellite which will be launched in February 2023. The aim of this investment was

52 — “Blue Water Shipping Invests DKK 100 Million in Greenland Expansion”, *Break Bull News*, July 26, 2024.

53 — Danielle Rose, “King, queen of Denmark, Greenland prime minister visit Pituffik SB”, *Official United States Space Force Website*, July 1, 2024.

54 — Valerie Insinna, “Watch the skies: How a US base in Greenland tracks ballistic missiles”, *Defense News*, Aug. 5, 2019.

55 — Srikapardhi, “Tusass Engages in Discussions With Starlink and Others for Connectivity in Greenland”, *TelecomTalk*, April 29, 2024.

to improve connectivity in North and East Greenland. Whatever the future role of Starlink, the island's critical infrastructure (including subsea cable called Greenland Connect connecting Canada-Greenland-Iceland) is going to be a source of enduring concern for the Government of Greenland, as well as others including Denmark, Iceland and the United States.⁵⁶ As recently witnessed in and around Svalbard and the Baltic Sea, subsea sabotage has been widely documented with Chinese and Russian vessels suspected as the perpetrators. It is well known that both Greenland and Iceland are vulnerable to significant disruption if such cables were severed accidentally or deliberately.⁵⁷ All of which serves, yet again, as a reminder that Denmark is going to face repeated pressure to invest more in maritime surveillance and critical infrastructure protection in Greenland.

Conclusion

Islands are going to take on an exaggerated importance in the second administration of President Trump. Taiwan, Diego Garcia and Greenland are the three that will occupy the most presidential time. Taiwan faces the prospect of a Chinese blockade and possible invasion at some point before 2027. The US military base on Diego Garcia on British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) is to this date part of ongoing negotiations between the UK and Mauritius. There are concerns that if the UK relinquishes sovereignty over BIOT, the operational security of Diego Garcia could be compromised given that Mauritius is a strategic ally of China.⁵⁸ Finally, the future of Greenland will continue to be of interest to the Trump administration. With improved airport and satellite connectivity, Greenland accommodates highly sensitive US surveillance assets that are integral to early warning systems and missile defence. Greenland's air and naval facilities also offer important connectivity between North America, North Atlantic and the wider Arctic regions. With China's growing polar activities, sometimes in alliance with Russia, the pressure will remain to ensure that the US enjoys high levels of operational awareness and a critical communications infrastructure that is secure.

The world's largest island is a capstone for the defence and security of the Arctic and North Atlantic regions. And President Trump is likely to draw attention to all the above, even if it causes considerable awkwardness for others, including the Danes. None of this will cause sleepless nights for a president who believes the US faces an existential threat from China and that neither the international liberal order nor smaller regional NATO allies can provide the level of defence and security investment that the US expects. Making sure Greenland does not fall into the economic and security orbit of China is an important consideration as is potentially shutting down the possibility that the Government of Greenland can seek to join the EU. Whatever happens, United Airlines will begin flying direct from Newark to Nuuk in the summer of 2025, and younger Greenlanders are embracing English as their second language.

56 — Dan Swinhoe, "Greenland's Tusass begins survey for new subsea cable", *Data Center Dynamics*, July 24, 2023.

57 — Darren Adam, "Iceland effectively cut off if cable connections fail", *The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service*, Jan. 22, 2024.

58 — Cahal Milmo, "How China's Shadowy influence over Chagos' Islands is growing", *I/News*, Oct. 4, 2024.