

# MP-IDSA *Commentary*

## Trump and Greenland

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### **S***ummary*

President Donald Trump's interest in Greenland appears to be driven by a desire to secure US interests in the Arctic for long-term geostrategic and economic reasons.

After a successful military intervention in Venezuela, United States President Donald Trump is now making efforts to seek control over Greenland. He appears to be considering two options: one, to purchase it from Denmark; two, to use military force to effect the takeover. Trump’s obsession with Greenland is not new. Even during Trump 1.0, he had expressed a desire to acquire Greenland. This issue is going to significantly strain the relations between the European Union (EU) and the US.

Leaders from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Britain and Denmark have issued a statement mentioning that, “Greenland belongs to its people. It is for Denmark and Greenland, and them only, to decide on matters concerning Denmark and Greenland.”<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister of Denmark, Mette Frederiksen, said that “if Trump took over Greenland, that would mark an end of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)”, which is an inter-governmental military alliance between the EU and North America, founded in the aftermath of World War II.<sup>2</sup>

Geographically part of the North American continent, Greenland has been politically and culturally linked to Europe for over a thousand years. Today, Greenland functions as an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, exercising self-governance while remaining under Danish sovereignty. It shares a small 1.2 km land border with Canada. Greenland does not share a land border with the US, but it's geographically part of North America. Greenland’s inhabitants are full citizens of Denmark and, by extension, of the EU, reflecting its enduring European political affiliation.

Greenland's population in 2025 was approximately 55,700–57,000. Greenland is the world's largest island, covering approximately 2.16 million square km. Approximately 80 per cent of this area is covered by the massive Greenland Ice Sheet, with ice-free areas primarily along the coast. The key issue, therefore, is why the US is keen to acquire Greenland despite its harsh climate and challenging geography.

Geostrategic and economic considerations drive the US interest in acquiring Greenland. Greenland occupies a pivotal position in the Arctic. This region lies between the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. It has key Arctic shipping lanes and is part of the crucial GIUK (Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom) Gap, a chokepoint used by NATO to monitor Russian naval movements. NATO has concerns in this regard, particularly in light of Russia's renewed naval activity.

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<sup>1</sup> Jude Sheerin, “[US Discussing Options to Acquire Greenland, Including Use of Military, Says White House](#)”, *BBC*, 7 January 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Anders Kongshaug, Claudia Ciobanu and Stefanie Dazio, “[Danish Prime Minister Says a US Takeover of Greenland Would Mark the End of NATO](#)”, *Associated Press*, 6 January 2026.

The GIUK Gap (broader than classic maritime choke points) functions as a critical transit corridor that channels naval movement between northern European waters and the wider Atlantic. Since taking office as US president approximately one year ago, Trump has given indications that he is a NATO sceptic. Clearly, Trump wants only the US to dominate Arctic power politics.

In addition, Greenland possesses significant untapped reserves of rare earth elements (RREs), critical minerals and hydrocarbons. All these resources are central to technological and energy security. The Trump administration is already pursuing an assertive strategy to secure access to strategic minerals in other parts of the world. There are arrangements in place with Australia and resource-rich states in Southeast Asia, Africa and West Asia.<sup>3</sup> He has also sought Ukraine's access to its mineral deposits. All efforts are being made to reduce the mineral-dependent reliance on China.

Greenland holds considerable strategic relevance for the US defence establishment. The region is essential for space and missile defence activities. Greenland's geographic position between North America and Europe makes it vital for early-warning and surveillance missions. At the heart of this role is the Pituffik Space Base (formerly Thule Air Base), a key US Department of Defense installation operated by the 821<sup>st</sup> Space Base Group under the US Space Force's Space Base Delta 1. The base supports ballistic-missile early-warning systems, satellite tracking, secure communications and space-domain awareness, forming the basis of the US homeland defence architecture against long-range missile threats.<sup>4</sup>

In May 2025, Donald Trump unveiled a new national defence initiative, the 'Golden Dome'. The proposed missile defence system is envisioned as a space-based missile shield designed to counter threats from incoming nuclear (or non-nuclear) tipped ballistic missiles as well as emerging hypersonic weapons.<sup>5</sup> For this purpose, the US could deploy a constellation of satellite interceptors, possibly equipped with kinetic or directed-energy weapons. Greenland's strategic geopolitical location could be of great importance for positioning various Golden Dome-related systems.

Beyond its military utility, Greenland also contributes significantly to cutting-edge scientific research, particularly in astronomy and space science. Its high latitude,

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<sup>3</sup> [“Historic Critical Minerals Framework Signed by President Trump and Prime Minister Albanese”](#), Prime Minister of Australia, 21 October 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Miranda Bryant, [“‘Welcome to the Top of the World’: The Pituffik US Space Base in Greenland”](#), *The Guardian*, 28 March 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Bernd Debusmann Jr, [“Trump Unveils Plans for 'Golden Dome' Defence System”](#), *BBC*, 21 May 2025.

cold and dry atmosphere, and minimal radio interference make it an ideal location for deep-space observation. Located at the Pituffik Space Base is the Greenland Telescope Project, which has a 12-metre scanning antenna. This telescope is part of a global network studying supermassive black holes and has contributed to breakthroughs, including the imaging of black hole environments. Taiwan leads this project. For the US, such engagements could have both scientific and strategic relevance.<sup>6</sup>

Trump may not accept the scientific rationale for climate change, but he is aware that accelerated ice melt is occurring in the Arctic. In the future, this could lead to the opening of shorter maritime routes linking the Atlantic and the Pacific. This would be very beneficial for global shipping. Obviously, this would have an impact on supply chains and trade. This would also allow the US to increase its maritime dominance. Broadly, it could be said that there is a method behind Trump’s thinking regarding the acquisition of Greenland. It is intended for mineral exploration, space exploration, scientific research and military applications. Trump is seeking to secure US interests in the Arctic for long-term geostrategic and economic reasons.

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<sup>6</sup> [“Greenland Telescope”](#), Center for Astrophysics.

## About the Author



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