

## KEY PHRASES YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO DEFINE (more of them, that is)

**The Monroe Doctrine**

**The “Donroe” Doctrine (?)**

**Manifest Destiny**

**Globalism**

**Hemispheric expansionism**

**“Revisionist Transatlanticism”**

**The Gilded Age**

**The International Emergency Economic Power Act**

### ■ **Gilded Age**

period of gross materialism and blatant political corruption in U.S. history during the 1870s that gave rise to important novels of social and political criticism. The period takes its name from the earliest of these, *The Gilded Age* (1873), written by Mark Twain in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner. The novel gives a vivid and accurate description of Washington, D.C., and is peopled with caricatures of many leading figures of the day, including greedy industrialists and corrupt politicians.

The great burst of industrial activity and corporate growth that characterized the Gilded Age was presided over by a collection of colorful and energetic entrepreneurs who became known alternatively as “captains of industry” and “robber barons.” They grew rich through the monopolies they created in the steel, petroleum, and transportation industries. Among the best known of them were John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Leland Stanford, and J.P. Morgan.

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/event/Gilded-Age>

**See also:**

- Recréer un second « Gilded Age » (Âge doré) : les illusions de Trump  
<https://nouvelles.univ-rennes2.fr/article/recrere-second-gilded-age-age-dore-illusions-trump>
- The Guardian article below

## ■ Manifest destiny



[\*\*American Progress, chromolithograph print, c. 1873\*\*](#) American Progress, chromolithograph print, c. 1873, after an 1872 painting of the same title by John Gast.

**Manifest Destiny**, in U.S. history, the supposed inevitability of the continued territorial expansion of the boundaries of the United States westward to the Pacific and beyond. Before the American Civil War (1861–65), the idea of Manifest Destiny was used to validate continental acquisitions in the Oregon Country, Texas, New Mexico, and California. The purchase of Alaska after the Civil War briefly revived the concept of Manifest Destiny, but it most evidently became a renewed force...

Source : Encyclopedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/event/Manifest-Destiny>

See also:

- **American Progress : La Destinée Manifeste par John Gast**  
<https://revue-histoire.fr/histoire-contemporaine/la-destinee-manifeste-de-john-gast-american-progress/>
- **UCLA History-Geography Project**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYaCUgFKYaU>

## ■ About J.D. Vance's speech at the Munich Conference

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/14/thought-and-cancelled-elections-how-do-jd-vances-europe-claims-stand-up>

## ■ More analyses on new imperialism

**PODCASTS** Two interesting conversations with Ann Applebaum ( a Pulitzer-prize winning author and a specialist of international affairs and in particular relationships with Russia)

• **Anne Applebaum: Why Do MAGA Republicans Hate Europe So Much? + Why they are attracted to Russia**

Decoding Geopolitics Podcast with Dominik Presl, August 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViiAeTeqHKY>

• **Watch out Greenland: Trump is pro-imperialism now – Full Story podcast**

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/audio/2026/jan/09/watch-out-greenland-trump-is-pro-imperialism-now-full-story-podcast>

Jonathan Freedland in conversation with A.A. trying to assess whether there is such a thing as a “Donroe doctrine”.

### Trump's territorial ambition: new imperialism or a case of the emperor's new clothes?

Julian Borger *The Guardian*, Sat 10 Jan 2026

Trump's attack on Venezuela suggests expansionism is under way but some argue it is simply standard US foreign policy stripped of hypocrisy



Composite: Artwork by Alex Mellon and Guardian Design. Source Photographs by Getty Images, Reuters  
The attack on Venezuela and the seizure of its president was a shocking enough start to 2026, but it was only the next day, when the smoke had dispersed and Donald Trump was flying from Florida to Washington DC in triumph, that it became clear the world had entered a new era.

The US president was leaning on a bulkhead on Air Force One, in a charcoal suit and gold tie, regaling reporters with inside details of the abduction of Nicolás Maduro. He claimed his government was “in charge” of Venezuela and that US companies were poised to extract the country’s oil wealth.

Clearly giddy with the success of the operation, achieved without a single US fatality but several Venezuelan and Cuban ones, Trump then served notice on a string of other nations that could face the same fate. “Cuba is ready to fall,” he said. Colombia was run by a “sick man” who was selling cocaine to the US but who would not “be doing it for very long”.



Trump speaking to reporters on Air Force One the day after the seizure of Nicolás Maduro. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Trump said he would postpone for 20 days to two months any discussions about his desired takeover of Greenland, the semi-autonomous territory of Denmark, a Nato ally, but made clear he was determined to seize it for the sake of US “national security”.

New imperialism

Lest there was any doubt about the scale of Trump’s territorial ambitions, his administration posted its message to the world in capital letters, some of them red, on social media.

“This is OUR hemisphere,” the state department declared on X above a black and white picture of Trump looking grimly determined.

The White House deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller, went on CNN to provide the rationale for Trump’s new approach to foreign policy.

“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 since the beginning of time,” he said.

Miller is one of the few aides to have served in high positions in both the first and second Trump tenures. He has emerged as chief ideologue, channelling the impulses of the president and packaging them as policy.

In a social media post on Monday, Miller addressed the bigger picture and argued it was time for the west to stop apologising for its imperialist past.

“Not long after World War II the West dissolved its empires and colonies and began sending colossal sums of taxpayer-funded aid to these former territories (despite have [sic] already made them far wealthier and more successful),” Miller wrote.

“The neoliberal experiment, at its core, has been a long self-punishment of the places and peoples that built the modern world.”

The US has invaded a long list of countries and changed regimes many times over the past few decades, but this is the first time it has done so since the second world war as a self-proclaimed exercise in imperialism. The extraordinary change in rhetoric coming from Washington means all three of the world’s military superpowers are overtly pursuing revanchist aims, the recovery of lost imperial greatness.



San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico, which is one of five territories under US sovereignty. Photograph: trekandshoot/Alamy

Vladimir Putin has taken on the mantle of Peter and Catherine the Great in restoring historical Russian lands, at the cost so far of a million Russian troops killed or injured in Ukraine, according to the British Ministry of Defence, the culmination of a string of conquests in Chechnya and Georgia.

Xi Jinping has dedicated himself to China’s “great rejuvenation”, which includes recovering the territorial expanse of the Qing empire at its high-water mark before the “century of humiliation” at the hands of foreign powers from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries. Beijing’s projection of force with military bases around the South China Sea draws from that rationale, but Xi has repeatedly made clear the mission will not be completed until Taiwan is back under Beijing’s rule.

Like the other two ageing autocrats, Trump’s vision for his country harks back to a bygone imperial past. His favourite president is William McKinley, who led the US through a surge of territorial expansion at the end of the 19th century, including the military takeover of Cuba and the annexation of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines and American Samoa.

Trump has also looked to the early 19th century for inspiration for his new bout of territorial acquisitiveness, in the form of the Monroe doctrine.



James Monroe, the fifth US president. Photograph: Getty Images

“It was very important, but we forgot about it. We don’t forget about it any more,” the president said on Saturday.

The reference not only reflected a view of the past uncomplicated by any detailed reading on Trump’s part, but also the changing relationship between the US and the notion of empire.

The country was founded as a rejection of British imperialism and when President James Monroe developed his doctrine in 1823, setting out the leading US role in the Americas, it was to act as a barrier to any further European colonialism.

The version of the doctrine that Trump appears to embrace, however, is its repurposing by Teddy Roosevelt in 1904 at the height of a US exercise in traditional imperialism. Under the “Roosevelt corollary”, the US took on the role of “police power” which would intervene in any country in the region where it perceived there to be “flagrant cases of wrongdoing or impotence”.

In its national security strategy document published in November, a blueprint for the expansionism of early 2026, the White House laid out a “Trump corollary” to the Monroe doctrine “to restore American pre-eminence in the western hemisphere”.

Trump calls it the “Donroe doctrine”, copying a New York Post front page from a year earlier. The difference from previous versions, he boasted characteristically, was that it would be bigger and better.

The original Monroe doctrine was “a big deal”, he said, but added: “We’ve superseded it by a lot, by a real lot.” For all the febrile talk of doctrine and the sharp swerve in rhetoric coming from the White House, it is far from clear how it intends to proceed in Venezuela.

New president, old policy?

There appears to be disagreement within the administration – to the extent there is detailed discussion at all – on how to turn the president’s self-image of hemispheric emperor into a plan of action. Until that happens, what Trump has done in Venezuela is arguably not out of line with what the US has done around the world, but particularly in the Americas, when it was supposed to be abiding by the post-1945 “rules-based order”.

Some argue that, as seen from the global south, US imperialism has remained a constant, and that all Trump has done is to drop the mask of hypocrisy.

“The idea that this is new is ridiculous,” said Kehinde Andrews, a professor of black studies at Birmingham City University in the UK and the author of *The New Age of Empire: How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World*. “The US has been doing this all along, but the only difference here is it’s just brazen. There’s nothing new about this at all. This is what the west does; Trump’s just honest about it. I actually find it refreshing to be honest.”

Andrews added that if Trump carried out his threat to seize Greenland, directing his imperialist appetites towards another western state and thereby crippling Nato, it would mark a significant break with the past. But for that same reason, he doubted it would happen. “If it was a black or brown place, it would have happened already,” Andrews said.



Houses on the coast of a sea inlet in Nuuk, Greenland. Photograph: Evgeniy Maloletka/AP

Daniel Immerwahr, a historian and humanities professor at Northwestern University in Illinois, and the author of *How to Hide an Empire*, agreed that “the US empire never really ended”.

He pointed out that the US still owns five permanently inhabited territories – Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa – and maintains 750 military bases around the world.

On the other hand, Immerwahr argued that, for all the US hypocrisy and double standards under the “rules-based international order”, it remained markedly different to the imperial era.

“The notion that as the US got more powerful it would grow larger – that was largely broken by the end of world war two,” Immerwahr said. While the liberal international order did not stop invasions and wars, “it is also true that the post-1945 era has seen far more decolonisation than imperial expansion, in terms of territory. And that has helped bring down war deaths enormously”, he said.

The left has historically condemned the post-1945 global order because it baked in western advantage, but the more extreme elements of the right have despised it because it involved surrendering colonial assets, and helping old adversaries recover from the war.

Trump spent much of his career as a property developer railing against Japanese competition, an antipathy he has since broadened to China. Much of his rhetoric over Venezuela and other would-be imperial targets revolves around reclaiming assets, such as oil industry infrastructure, that had been “stolen” from the US. So in Trump’s view, making America truly great again inevitably demands a return to expansion. Putin and Xi are bent on making Russia and China great again, for similar motives.

#### Potential clash of empires

The US seizure this week of an oil tanker, the *Marinera*, despite the fact it was Russian flagged and escorted by a Russian submarine, brought into urgent focus the question of whether, and for how long, the ambitions of the three superpowers can be reconciled without major conflict.

“There can be really rather a protracted period of time in which empires can coexist,” Nathalie Tocci, the director of Italy’s Institute of International Affairs, said. “It’s not as if Trump is saying: I want to be the only empire; Trump is basically signalling and acting as if he’s absolutely fine with Russia and China being empires.

“In the short to medium term, I would say that the greater risk is not the empires clashing with one another, but the subjugation of the colonies,” she said.



Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping attending a military parade in Beijing last year. Photograph: Rao Aimin/AP  
Putin and Xi would certainly be content with a world sliced into spheres of influence. During the first Trump administration, Russia informally floated the idea that the US could have a free hand in Venezuela in exchange

for Russia holding sway over Ukraine in its sphere of influence.

Fiona Hill, who at the time was serving in the Trump White House as the national security council director for Russian and European affairs, said: “The Russians were trying it on. It was all vague and a matter of hint-hint, wink-wink, saying: ‘Let’s talk about the Monroe doctrine,’ and then giving a meaningful look.”

Hill said the first Trump administration rejected the suggestion of any such deal, but she acknowledged that the president’s views on empire had clearly evolved.

“I remember actually telling people before that he was a real estate mogul. He didn’t want to own your country, just put up his buildings on it,” she said. “But I suppose it’s a quick jump for him from real estate to state acquisition, and that’s what we weren’t anticipating before.”

Hill is not confident that the three great revanchist empires can stay out of each other’s way. In his newly whetted appetite for US expansionism, Trump has reserved the right to act far beyond his hemisphere, bombing Iran or even running Gaza.

“He’s saying: ‘Hands off and keep away from the western hemisphere’, but he’s not necessarily going to leave China unchecked in the Asia-Pacific,” Hill said. “The US is still supposed to be an Asian-Pacific power, and part of the western hemisphere is in the Pacific. “This world is much more complex now,” she added. “It’s all very fragile, especially because we don’t know what mistakes he’s going to make.”

#### Domestic considerations

Trump’s imperial impulses may be constrained, to some extent, by US politics. Post-Venezuela polling suggested that large majorities, among Democrats and Republicans alike, were opposed to any long-term involvement in the country.

However, Trump’s Maga base was thrilled by the success of the operation, and his long-sagging popularity gained a minor bump. For a president seeking to distract from an intractable affordability crisis at home and the looming threat of more child-trafficking revelations in the Epstein files, that may be enough to seek out other quick military spectacles abroad.

With the guardrails of the old order demolished, Trump’s US would be an ever more chaotic factor in the world, not coherent enough to be called an empire but imperial in the imposition of suffering by the strong on the weak.

Writing in *Mother Jones* this week, the magazine’s Washington editor, David Corn, suggested that is the essence of the real Trump doctrine: “Violence is ours to use, at home and abroad, to get what we want.”



A military officer comforts Ramona Palma, the mother of the Venezuelan soldier Cesar Garcia, who was killed in the US raid, after his wake in Caracas. Photograph: Matias Delacroix/AP

#### What was the Monroe doctrine?

The Trump administration has revived the 203-year-old Monroe doctrine, and made it the cornerstone of its newly aggressive policy in the Americas.

The US national security strategy (NSS) published in November, stated that: “After years of neglect, the United States will reassert and enforce the Monroe doctrine to restore American pre-eminence in the western hemisphere.”

Trump himself has bandied the term about, characteristically adapting it to the “Donroe doctrine”, a play on his first name to emphasise his ownership of the idea.

The original doctrine, put forward by President James Monroe in 1823, meant something quite different. He proposed that the recently established United States act as a guarantor against European imperialism in the region, declaring the nations of the American continents were “not to be considered as subjects for future colonisation by any European powers”.

In 1904, however, the doctrine was updated by President Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt to suit the enthusiasm for US colonialism at the time, in the aftermath of the Spanish-American war. The “Roosevelt corollary” bestowed “international police power” on Washington to intervene anywhere in the Americas where it perceived there to be “chronic wrongdoing” by a sovereign government.

The NSS declares a new “Trump corollary” to the doctrine, marking a return to colonial appetites, and the president’s focus on natural resources. It states no outside power has the right to “own or control strategically vital assets”.

## ■ON GREENLAND – Hard Power no longer mitigated nor complemented by soft power

- [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2026/01/17/donald-trump-choisit-l-escalade-commerciale-contre-l-europe-pour-obtenir-l-annexion-du-groenland\\_6662984\\_3210.html?lmd\\_medium=email&lmd\\_campaign=trf\\_newsletters\\_lmr&lmd\\_creation=a\\_la\\_une&lmd\\_send\\_date=20260118&lmd\\_link=tempsforts-title&M\\_BT=61998527606396](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2026/01/17/donald-trump-choisit-l-escalade-commerciale-contre-l-europe-pour-obtenir-l-annexion-du-groenland_6662984_3210.html?lmd_medium=email&lmd_campaign=trf_newsletters_lmr&lmd_creation=a_la_une&lmd_send_date=20260118&lmd_link=tempsforts-title&M_BT=61998527606396)
- [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2026/01/17/au-groenland-la-methode-trump-a-dresse-la-population-contre-les-etats-unis\\_6662716\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2026/01/17/au-groenland-la-methode-trump-a-dresse-la-population-contre-les-etats-unis_6662716_3210.html)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International\\_Emergency\\_Economic\\_Powers\\_Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Emergency_Economic_Powers_Act)

### Menaces de surtaxes douanières : face à Donald Trump, le Royaume-Uni hausse le ton de manière inhabituelle

Downing Street a qualifié de « totalement inadmissible » la menace d'imposer des taxes douanières pour forcer une annexion américaine du Groenland. Keir Starmer est de plus en plus pressé d'en finir avec une posture plutôt accommodante pour le président américain.

Par [Cécile Ducourtieux](#) (Londres, correspondante), *Le Monde*, 18 janvier 2026



Le premier ministre britannique, Keir Starmer, au 10 Downing Street, dans le centre de Londres, le 16 janvier 2026.  
HENRY NICHOLLS VIA REUTERS

La tactique britannique de l'apaisement a-t-elle encore un sens ? Pendant près d'un an, jusqu'aux demandes extravagantes de Donald Trump concernant le Groenland, le premier ministre, Keir Starmer, a refusé de critiquer ouvertement le président américain, répétant que la « *relation spéciale* » entre Londres et Washington restait essentielle, spécialement la coopération en matière de défense et de renseignement, et que « *choisir* » entre l'Union européenne et les Etats-Unis constituait une « *erreur stratégique* ». Mais la coupe semble pleine pour le dirigeant travailliste qui ose enfin résister, au moins de façon rhétorique, aux intimidations trumpniennes.

« *Imposer des droits de douane à des alliés qui défendent la sécurité collective des membres de l'OTAN est totalement inadmissible* », a promptement réagi Downing Street samedi 17 janvier, suite aux menaces

américaines d'imposer des taxes supplémentaires à l'exportation pour tous les pays s'opposant à sa volonté d'acquérir le Groenland. « *Notre position sur le Groenland est très claire : il fait partie du royaume du Danemark et c'est aux Groenlandais et aux Danois de décider de son avenir* », a aussi souligné Keir Starmer. Cette position « *n'est pas négociable* », renchérissait Lisa Nandy, la ministre de la culture de M. Starmer, dépechée sur les plateaux de télévision, dimanche, pour réagir au nom de son gouvernement.

Jouer aux intermédiaires entre Washington et les Européens est depuis des décennies – et encore plus depuis le Brexit – l'une des constantes de la diplomatie britannique. Pendant des mois, Keir Starmer a dépensé beaucoup de capital politique pour préserver ce rôle de premier allié de Trump sur le Vieux Continent, honorant même Donald Trump d'une seconde visite d'Etat en septembre 2025, avec parades militaires et dîner fastueux au château de Windsor. Etait-ce sa fascination pour la famille royale, l'origine écossaise de sa mère ou sa détestation de l'Union européenne ? Jusqu'à l'automne 2025, Donald Trump a semblé vouloir ménager le Royaume-Uni.

### Pénalisant sur le plan national

Londres a été, par exemple, la première capitale occidentale à obtenir, dès le 8 mai 2025, un accord de principe limitant à 10 % l'imposition de taxes sur l'essentiel des exportations de biens britanniques aux Etats-Unis, légèrement moins pénalisant que pour ses homologues européens. Leurs exportations d'acier restent cependant taxées à hauteur de 25 %, et si les Britanniques ont obtenu une exemption de taxes pour leurs exportations de produits pharmaceutiques, ils se sont en retour engagés à ce que le NHS, le système de santé public national, augmente son prix d'achat pour les nouveaux médicaments venus des Etats-Unis.

Dimanche, malgré le notable changement de ton britannique, Downing Street refusait d'évoquer la menace de représailles commerciales contre Washington. Interrogée à ce propos sur SkyNews, la ministre de la culture, Lisa Nandy, n'a pas exclu non plus d'en arriver à cet impensé de la diplomatie britannique. Pour Keir Starmer, accepter tous les coups et humiliations américains sans réagir, devient de plus en plus pénalisant sur le plan national : selon un sondage Ipsos publié le 12 janvier, 47 % des Britanniques estiment que le premier ministre ne gère pas bien la relation avec Donald Trump, contre 14 % seulement en septembre 2025.

Comme en France ou en Allemagne, la perspective d'une guerre commerciale avec les Etats-Unis est aussi une très mauvaise nouvelle pour la chancelière de l'Echiquier, Rachel Reeves, alors que l'économie britannique est atone (un PIB en hausse de 1,5 % sur 2025, selon l'Office for Budget Responsibility) et qu'elle est pressée de trouver des milliards de livres sterling supplémentaires pour financer la protection sociale et la défense. Le ministère de la défense britannique, en particulier, réclame 28 milliards de livres (32 milliards d'euros) en plus sur les quatre prochaines années, pour mener à bien toutes les tâches qui lui sont demandées.

## ■ A few editorials commenting the Trump administration's bullying approach

• **The Wall Street Journal** Interestingly, a newspaper owned by conservative media tycoon Rupert Murdoch has ripped Donald Trump's assault on NATO as he forges ahead with his push to seize Greenland by any means necessary. "For more than 75 years, the fondest dream of Russian strategy has been to divide Western Europe from the U.S. and break the NATO alliance," [The Wall Street Journal's editorial board wrote](#). "That is now a possibility as President Trump presses his campaign to capture Greenland no matter what the locals or its Denmark owner thinks," the newspaper added.

**Here is a discussion between its editorialists they included online in their editorial criticising Trump's policies**

"It's more a vanity project than a security project"

<https://www.wsj.com/video/series/journal-editorial-report/wsj-opinion-trumps-greenland-gambit/1197AA56-D6B9-4BC7-BE2A-6B49E56CE123>

### The Greenland War of 2026

***Trump's lesson in how to turn U.S. allies into China's friends.***

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By [The Editorial Board](#), ***The Wall Street Journal***, Jan. 20, 2026

For more than 75 years, the fondest dream of Russian strategy has been to divide Western Europe from the U.S. and break the NATO alliance. That is now a possibility as President Trump presses his campaign to capture Greenland no matter what the locals or its Denmark owner thinks.

Mr. Trump on Saturday threatened to impose a 10% tariff starting Feb. 1 on a handful of European countries that have opposed his attempt to obtain U.S. sovereignty over Greenland. The tariff would jump to 25% on June 1. Presumably this tariff would come on top of the rates Mr. Trump already negotiated in trade deals last year (10% for Britain, 15% for the European Union).

The targets are Denmark (which owns Greenland), Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and the United Kingdom. All participated in a recent military exercise on the world's largest island that was intended to reassure Washington that Europe wants

to work with the U.S. to defend Greenland from Russia and China.

But Mr. Trump isn't taking alliance cooperation for an answer. He wants the U.S. to own Greenland, its ice, minerals, strategic location and 56,000 residents. And he seems prepared to push around everyone else to get it.

There are good reasons for Washington to care about Greenland, including the island's strategic position and untapped reserves of rare-earth minerals. Mr. Trump isn't the first President to suggest buying it outright, but the U.S. already has a high degree of access to the island, and Denmark is willing to negotiate more. Tariffs in the cause of bullying imperialism is the wrong way to make a deal, and they might stiffen opposition on the island and in Europe.

Mr. Trump is taking reckless risk with the NATO alliance that advances U.S. interests in the arctic. If he

doesn't believe us, he can look up Norway, Sweden and Finland in an atlas. The latter two joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization recently, and already are discovering that with Mr. Trump no good strategic deed goes unpunished.

The economics are nonsensical too. All of the countries on his tariff list except for the United Kingdom and Norway are members of the European Union with a common trade policy. This means any tariff he imposes on those countries will have to extend to the entire 27-member bloc. So much for the trade deals Mr. Trump negotiated to great fanfare last year with the EU and the U.K.

Members of the European Parliament, which still must approve the U.S.-EU agreement, are threatening to put that pact on ice. This bullying plays poorly with the European public, making it harder for politicians to give Mr. Trump what he wants on Greenland or anything else. The message to these countries is that no deal with Mr. Trump can be trusted because he'll blow it up if he feels it serves his larger political purposes.

The Greenland Tariff War of 2026 imperils other U.S. priorities. The trade tax on Britain could upset an agreement Mr. Trump struck last year under which Britain will pay more for pharmaceuticals in exchange for Washington dropping tariffs on medication imports from the U.K. Speaking of which: Why Mr. Trump

would want to head into midterm elections foisting higher prices on voters worried about affordability is a mystery.

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No one should underestimate the shock his Greenland project is producing among allies. Along with his tariffs and his tilt toward Russia against Ukraine, he is alienating Western Europe in a way that will be hard to repair. It's true that Europe may not be in a position to resist if Mr. Trump really wants to go to war over the island. But say good-bye to NATO.

The sad irony is that China and Russia may be the biggest winners, though Mr. Trump justifies his Greenland necessity in the name of deterring both. Canada's Prime Minister bent the knee to Xi Jinping last week, and Britain's PM is heading there this month. The EU and South American countries have struck a big free-trade pact.

The West is in the process of a diplomatic and economic hedging operation against Mr. Trump's might-makes-right diplomacy. Whether or not Mr. Trump believes it, the U.S. needs friends in the world. He seems to think that if he captures Greenland, history will remember him as another Thomas Jefferson (Louisiana purchase) or William Seward (Alaska). The cost of his afflatus to U.S. interests will be greater than he imagines.

- A short analysis summing up the reservations expressed by *The National Review*

### Greenland: Digging a Deeper Hole

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By [Andrew Stuttaford](#), January 17, 2026

Using a bad tactic to pursue a counterproductive strategy, the president is now threatening to use tariffs as a weapon against countries that oppose his wish that the U.S. should take over Greenland.

With an eye, I imagine, to the Supreme Court, Trump has said that the U.S. "may put a tariff on countries if they don't go along with Greenland because we need Greenland for national security."

That is because presumably the administration would claim that its authority for any such tariffs derives from either the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) or Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act or both.

IEEPA empowers a president to take various economic actions "to deal with any unusual and extraordinary threat, which has its source in whole or substantial part outside the United States, to the national security, foreign policy or economy."

Do those actions include imposing tariffs, and, if they do, what conditions apply? The Supreme Court should be letting us know about that shortly.

Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act is meant to apply to imports that in one way or another "threaten to impair" U.S. national security. To say that this would entitle the administration to use tariffs *as leverage* in order to persuade other countries to submit to security-related demands that bear no obvious connection to imports seems to me to be a stretch, but who knows?

The irony of all this is that the administration has been right to stress that under-defended and very sparsely populated Greenland is both a vulnerability and, through its raw materials, an opportunity. At the same time, however, the way it has set about remedying the former and pursuing the latter has been counter-productive and, in the case of the former, something that could largely have been resolved under existing treaty arrangements. Using tariffs to bully Denmark and

Greenland would, in all probability, make an unnecessarily bad situation even worse. Believing that they would lead to a situation that improves national security seems . . . optimistic.

## Launching another trade war with Europe won't win Greenland

Tariffs aimed at coercing Denmark into selling the island will make America poorer.

*The Washington Post*, January 18, 2026



German troops board a flight on Sunday to leave Nuuk, Greenland. (Alessandro Rampazzo/AFP via Getty Images)

President Donald Trump threatened this weekend to unilaterally impose 10 percent tariffs on eight European countries until a deal is reached that makes Greenland part of the United States. In other words, American businesses and consumers will pay higher prices because Denmark, a strong ally which already welcomes U.S. troops and investment in Greenland, isn't willing to cede territory.

In addition to Denmark, the new tariff will also affect goods from Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Those seven each sent a handful of troops to Greenland to participate in a Danish military exercise. Trump threatened to raise the duties to 25 percent on all eight countries come June if no agreement has been reached.

Without firing a shot or breaking up NATO, Trump hopes to bully and cajole Denmark into selling a swath of its kingdom that is geographically larger than Mexico. Trump, a developer at heart, sees this as a potential crown jewel for his legacy. Such an acquisition would be slightly larger than President Thomas Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase. U.S. planners reportedly estimate that purchasing Greenland could cost up to \$700 billion, though economic coercion may lower the price tag, as does the U.S. refusing to rule out using the military to take it by force.

But Denmark insists it will never sell, and Trump's behavior is already exacting an intangible price on the transatlantic relationship. The eight countries put out a joint statement on Sunday to say Trump's "tariff threats undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral." They downplayed the small contingents of troops they sent to Greenland,

saying it was part of a preplanned exercise called "Arctic Endurance" that "poses no threat to anyone."

It sure doesn't. The French sent 15 mountain infantrymen. The Fins and Norwegians sent two officers apiece. The Brits sent one officer, and he was not James Bond.

But Trump reacted angrily, and now Americans will pay higher prices for products like Legos and Ozempic, both made by Danish companies. French President Emmanuel Macron wants the European Union to retaliate by invoking anti-coercion rules, imposing tariffs on U.S. goods and blocking U.S. investment. The E.U. is preparing a package of tariffs on U.S. products that could raise 93 billion euros, effectively a tax hike on European consumers.

The president and his allies are increasingly making the case that Greenland is strategically vital and resource rich, but America already has easy access. The Space Force maintains a base there. Denmark has been a particularly strong, committed and inoffensive partner. The Danes suffered one of the highest per capita fatality rates in supporting America's military response to the 9/11 attacks.

Most of Greenland's 57,000 residents, who receive subsidies and the largesse of a European welfare state, don't want to be sold to America, despite past mistreatment by the Danes. If anything, they want independence. Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen joined a Saturday protest to oppose any sale to the United States.

Finally, there is the legal question of whether Trump even has the authority to impose his threatened tariffs

without an act of Congress. The Supreme Court will hopefully decide soon that the president is abusing his power under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which does not even mention the word tariffs. Pressed Sunday on what emergency justifies

imposing import taxes on European goods in pursuit of Greenland, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent replied: “The national emergency is avoiding the national emergency.”

## The Guardian view on Trump and Greenland: get real! Bullying is not strength

### Editorial

*Tariff threats over the Arctic island expose the limits of coercive diplomacy. Europe's united response and pushback shows fear is fading*

**Sun 18 Jan 2026**

For all Donald Trump's bluster about restoring American strength, his attempt to bully European allies over Greenland reveals a deeper weakness: coercive diplomacy only works if people are afraid to resist. Increasingly, they aren't. And that is a good thing. Bullies often back down when confronted – their power relies on fear. Mr Trump's threat to impose sweeping tariffs on Europeans unless they acquiesce to his demand to “purchase” Greenland has stripped his trade policy bare. This is not about economic security, unfair trade or protecting American workers. It is about using tariffs as a weapon to force nations to submit.

The response from Europe has been united and swift. That in itself should send a message. France's Emmanuel Macron says plainly “no amount of intimidation” will alter Europe's position. Denmark has anchored the issue firmly inside Nato's collective security. EU leaders have warned that tariff threats risk a dangerous downward spiral. Even Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, seen as ideologically close to Mr Trump, publicly called the tariff threat a “mistake” – adding that she has told him so.

What Mr Trump did not reckon with was that intimidating Europe would carry institutional consequences. The European parliament is now moving to pause ratification of the EU-US trade deal that European leaders were pressured by the US to accept last summer. The three largest parliamentary blocs in Strasbourg – conservatives, social democrats and liberals – are marching together. In Brussels, this is not theatre. The EU runs trade policy, not individual capitals, as Britain found out during Brexit. Mr Trump can threaten governments; he cannot browbeat European institutions designed to withstand coercion.

The UK is speaking up. Though outside the EU, the country issued a joint statement with allies saying that Mr Trump's threat risks a “dangerous downward spiral” and “undermines transatlantic relations”. On his own Sir Keir Starmer was reduced to pleading for better behaviour. Britain is like Greece to America's Rome – with the added trauma of having once been Rome itself. But there are signs of a rules-based system being built without the US. Canada, one of America's closest allies, is hedging its bets. The country's trade deal with Beijing shows how middle powers shift when Washington becomes erratic. Diversifying away from Mr Trump's America is the right route to take. The US president ought to drop his tough talk and get on with bolstering Greenland's defences and, if necessary, building proper commercial partnerships that benefit both the US and the island's population.

Some point to Richard Nixon's “madman theory” as a historical precedent. But there is a difference between unpredictability that creates leverage and recklessness that destroys trust. Nixon shocked the system in 1971 because the system was coming apart. Today we have disorder, but Mr Trump shocks the system because he seems to enjoy the spectacle. That matters because coercive foreign policy requires domestic legitimacy. Polling shows a majority of Americans think Mr Trump's presidency a failure. A president who lacks consent at home cannot credibly demand submission abroad. What he projects instead is desperation. Mr Trump believes influence comes through ultimatums and coercion. But power, in the real world, rests on trust, predictability and persuading others to follow. Yet allies are pushing back. The more Mr Trump resorts to bullying, the more the world will learn how to live without him.

### ■ Some sort of dissent within the Republican party

[https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/17/republicans-trump-greenland?CMP=Share\\_AndroidApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/17/republicans-trump-greenland?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other)

### Trump airing Macron's private message was designed to hurt and intimidate

Patrick Wintour, Diplomatic editor

The US president uses mass communication to destabilise his rivals, but the risk is that frank exchange may dry up

***The Guardian***, Tue 20 Jan 2026

The words “private and confidential” have never meant a great deal to Donald Trump. In his discussions with other world leaders, he has never operated much of a filter, happy to provide not just the facts of a conversation but also its content and tone, with descriptions all the way from beautiful to nasty.

But it is a new development (barring bits of mildly solicitous correspondence from Volodymyr Zelenskyy last year) for him to simply copy and paste the entirety of private messages on to social media, as he did in the case of Emmanuel Macron’s proposal to set up a G7 meeting in Paris to discuss Greenland, Ukraine and Syria.

The publication of Macron’s message was designed to hurt, just as a message attacking Keir Starmer was intended to wound. Fortunately for Macron, proposing a G7 meeting – a typically bold Macron initiative – did not reveal him saying one thing in public and something else in private. The views he expressed on Greenland, Syria, Iran and the need to work in tandem were concisely, if slightly fawningly, expressed and largely in line with his public views.

The episode again underlines that Trump’s methods remove the basic modicum of trust required for two leaders to cooperate efficiently. One leader tries to operate by the established rules of diplomatic efficiency. Trump blows them up.

In this case, Trump may have been annoyed with Macron, a man he enjoys belittling, because the French president had refused an offer of a seat on his board of peace; a refusal that threatens to unravel his plan to supplant the United Nations with a body he alone controls.

Trump may also have been annoyed earlier in the week by the leak of his own message to the prime minister of Norway, Jonas Gahr Støre, saying he no longer felt an obligation to think only of peace after being snubbed for the Nobel peace prize.

But the release of the Macron message was not just an act of reprisal or attention seeking. It is about Trump using mass communication as a way to intimidate and destabilise his rivals, by dominating the flow of information and changing the conventions.

The bland readout of a meeting between two leaders, drafted by officials and designed to obscure the content, is substituted with the raw data. Whitehall’s 30-year rule, barring the disclosure of British government documents for three decades after they were written, replaced by the 30-minute rule.

As the French author Philippe Corbé points out in his new book *Weapons of Mass Distraction*: “No president had ever achieved such omnipresence. In this fractured country, it gives him a singular power. It wasn’t money that propelled him but conversation. The creation of chaos is not an accidental byproduct of Trump, it is the method. Every void is filled with a provocation. He lights more fires than can be put out day after day, he cuts through the fog, saturates the ambient noise.”

Indeed, Trump’s whole career is built around transgressing norms and avoiding the consequences. Aged 80, diplomatic niceties are the least of his constraints.

There are risks in this. Iron is entering the soul of his one-time allies, infuriated by the courtesy and sometimes the humiliation of needing to turn their cheek once again. Leaders at some point need to show to their electorates, and themselves, that they can preserve their dignity and self-respect.

The arteries of frank exchange may dry up if there is an expectation that every exchange will be posted on Truth Social. Intelligence agencies will be guarded in handing over information if Trump is likely to have access to the names of agents or their sources. Yet this is a time when dialogue is needed more than ever, which was the underlying purpose of Macron’s message.

Trump respects some world leaders but he admits to trusting no one, not even Israel’s Benjamin Netanyahu, and the sentiment is requited. No one trusts him. They only fear him and his unpredictable, unfiltered psychology.

In fact, it is fair to say Trump seems no longer interested in privacy. In his first term he used to worry about leaks. In his second term there are no quiet reflective policy away-days. Instead, the doors have been flung open and it is government by spectacle. The presidency is all out there – in one long media encounter, on a plane, in the White House or on social media. As a result, there is nothing left to leak.