

16/01/2026

**Guillaume Duval,**  
Advisor on the future of  
European integration,  
Jacques Delors Institute

## BLOG — POST

# The power to say no

Donald Trump is bluffing. He may be unpredictable and difficult to read, but he would not dare send American troops to invade Greenland. That would be a completely different matter for him than sending helicopters and dropping a few bombs on Caracas.

### I • Donald Trump is bluffing

Not, of course, because the resistance of the Danish troops would be more formidable than that of the Cuban and Venezuelan troops guarding Nicolas Maduro's presidential palace. But because the political consequences would be much more serious for the United States, this time directly threatening the very survival of the Atlantic Alliance.

In domestic politics, it would also probably be much more complicated to get through. The multiple foreign military actions he has carried out in recent months are contrary to his campaign promises and the expectations of the MAGA base. Above all, the latter wants the executive to finally focus, as promised, on improving the living conditions of Americans. However, this is still acceptable when it comes to attacking the traditional enemies of the United States, such as the mullahs in Iran and the Chavistas in Venezuela. But attacking the Danes, one of the United States' most loyal allies, would not be so easily accepted. The Senate has already informed Donald Trump that he would have to go through Congress if he wanted to take further action in Venezuela.

Donald Trump is bluffing, as he has always done in his property deals, because he thinks and hopes that the Europeans will hand over Greenland to him on a silver platter in the coming weeks, just as they have already given in to quasi all his increasingly exorbitant demands over the past year.



And, unfortunately, given the European reactions to the Venezuelan affair, he has some good reasons to believe this... Moreover, he is well aware that Europeans still fear that he will abandon Ukraine by stopping the provision of intelligence or authorising the sale of American weapons.

## **II • Europeans have several levers at their disposal**

What can Europeans do to avoid further humiliation and dissuade him from continuing to push ahead? They can already commit to strengthening their own military presence in the Arctic in the NATO framework to deflate Donald Trump's security argument and start by deploying additional military forces in Greenland, and not just Danish forces, even on a symbolic scale at this stage.

However, security issues are obviously just a pretext for Donald Trump. The United States already has a military base in Greenland. And the Danes and Europeans are already prepared to strengthen their military presence in the Arctic to deal with the tensions developing there. As in Venezuela, the real issue for the American President is the raw materials and wealth hidden beneath Greenland's soil. In this regard, the Danes, Greenlanders, Europeans and Americans could undoubtedly agree to consider these potential resources as strategic and block access to them, particularly for Chinese or Russian mining companies.

Although dependent on Denmark, Greenland does not strictly speaking belong to the European Union. Denmark joined what was then the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. However, in 1982, the inhabitants of Greenland decided in a referendum to withdraw, mainly so as not to have to comply with the common fisheries policy. Greenland then became a simple overseas territory associated with the Union, like New Caledonia or French Polynesia. European legislation does not apply there, but these regions benefit in particular from the absence of customs duties on their exports to Europe.

Without formally reintegrating Greenland into the territory of the Union, which would involve a complex legal process (and would of course require the Greenlanders to agree this time), Europeans can decide to extend to Greenland the protection offered by Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, which states that 'in the event of armed aggression against the territory of a Member State, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power'. All that is required is the unanimous adoption of a simple additional interpretative declaration to the Treaty at the European Council. Such a text does not amend the Treaties and therefore does not require ratification by national parliaments.

Finally, they could, of course, threaten the United States with economic retaliation, using the anticoercion instrument created in 2023, if Donald Trump decides to go further regarding Greenland, particularly with regard to the American tech giants.

### III • Donald Trump only respects those who resist him

The European response must obviously be carefully measured, particularly in view of the Ukrainian issue, but the Greenland affair has clearly brought the time to finally abandon the low-profile policy towards Donald Trump that has prevailed for the past year.

This policy has reinforced Euroscepticism and brought only humiliation to the EU and its leaders. It has encouraged the American President to go even further in his increasingly exorbitant demands on us. Donald Trump only respects those who resist him.