

## BLOG — POST

# Europe's good approach



Europeans scored a point in Davos: for once, it was the unity and determination of European leaders, in support of Greenland and Denmark, that made Donald Trump back down.

Detractors will say that only eight countries<sup>1</sup> really resisted and participated in the military deployment operation in Greenland, a deployment they are quick to dismiss as unrealistic and ridiculous. They will add that other factors played a role: the reluctance of American public opinion, the concerns of MAGA voters about military adventures contrary to their isolationist credo, the possible panic on the markets, etc.

Certainly. But none of this detracts from the main lesson of this episode: collective resistance pays off. Member states, the Commission, and the European Parliament presented a united front, with the latter deciding to freeze the ratification of the trade agreement between the EU and the US.

What is also notable in this episode is the futility of Donald Trump's threats on customs duties: the US president had threatened to increase taxes on products from these eight countries to 25%, "until Greenland is sold in its entirety." However, this threat fell flat. Could it be that overuse of the "tariff" weapon is ultimately undermining its deterrent effect? Moreover, the EU and India finally signed a historic trade agreement, which the US Secretary of Commerce described as "very disappointing," without further comment.

<sup>1</sup> Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Finland

The first lesson from Greenland, after a year of Trump's presidency, is that Europe knows its red lines very well: while compromises may be possible on certain policies (particularly trade, where an unfavorable "deal" was accepted on July 27, 2025), certain principles must be defended tooth and nail: state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and respect for international law. These are the very foundations of minimal stability on the planet, and the Union itself exists only through the treaties that establish it, in other words, through the force of law.

The second lesson is even more crucial: Europe can only be influential if it knows how to systematically match its words with its actions. The statement by the eight countries only impressed Trump because it was backed up by concrete and immediate action. Donald Trump does not listen to speeches, he looks at facts. It is likely that if the Europeans had been content with the statement of January 18, 2026, without deploying Operation Arctic Endurance, the effect of their determination would have been much less.

The task now is to build on this success using the same method. First, on the political front. If they find it unacceptable that American figures (Steve Bannon, for example) publicly support far-right parties in Europe, Europeans should respond in kind: condemn this "foreign interference" and "information warfare" against democracy, and at the same time take action, i.e., ban these same figures from obtaining European visas<sup>2</sup>.

Next, on the digital front, the sanctions effectively provided for by European regulations must be applied: after imposing a \$2.95 billion fine on Google in September 2025 for anti-competitive practices, the Commission agreed to examine Google's proposals for negotiations for 60 days. With the deadline now passed, the Commission should demand immediate payment of the fine. Finally, on a strategic level, the "words and deeds" approach has become imperative: Europeans cannot wait to move towards the greatest possible strategic autonomy.

And that is where the shoe pinches, or at least where the NATO Secretary General's stick hits. The head of the Atlantic Organization has indeed sensed the danger: in an unbelievable statement, he warned Europeans: "If anyone here still thinks that the European Union, or Europe as a whole, can defend itself without the United States, keep dreaming. You can't. We can't, we need each other." Aiming at autonomous defense projects, he wanted to drive the point home: "It costs billions and billions of euros. And in that scenario, you would lose the ultimate guarantor of our freedom, namely the American nuclear umbrella. So, good luck."

It's like a dream. On the one hand, because it is the United States itself that wants Europeans to take charge of their own defense. "We won't always be there," warned Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth in Warsaw in February 2025: "It's time to invest, because you can't assume that the American presence will last forever." On the other hand, because NATO itself is working on the possibility of a European pillar, intended to strengthen European responsibilities and conventional defense capabilities. Finally, because Europeans themselves have defined strategic autonomy as one of the EU's major objectives. One might almost wonder what world the NATO Secretary General lives in.

<sup>2</sup> *If Hungary and other countries oppose it, they are free to display their extremist preferences.*

But ultimately, it doesn't matter. The reality is that the head of NATO is overlooking one obvious fact: what makes a military alliance valuable is not so much its budget as the trust placed in it : that of the members' reliability on each other, that of the citizens who must feel protected, not to mention the reassurance that must be given to the adversary regarding the solidity of this alliance.

But do we collectively trust America, after the killings in Minnesota, the threats to seize Greenland, the tariff blackmail, disregard for international law, circumvention of the UN, pro-Russian leanings, casual attitude toward Ukraine, political and financial support for the European far right, praise from Trumpist ideologues for authoritarianism and force, etc.? To be even clearer, can an increasingly authoritarian, lawless, and pro-Putin America defend Europe (which it hates) against Russian authoritarianism? It is because we find this increasingly difficult to believe that Europe's strategic sovereignty is of the utmost urgency.