STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What is Donald Trump's 'Greenland framework'?

International Relations

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Background

Donald Trump's "Greenland framework" emerged from a period of heightened interest from the former US president in acquiring the autonomous Danish territory, driven primarily by perceived national security interests and the island's strategic location. Following discussions with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, Trump announced a "framework of a future deal" aimed at addressing US concerns in the Arctic.

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What the 'future deal' means (or is intended to mean)?

The proposed framework largely centers on bolstering Arctic security and limiting the influence of rival powers. Key aspects include:

1. **Enhanced Arctic Security**: The framework is expected to involve NATO increasing its security efforts in the Arctic region. This is largely in response to concerns about growing Russian and Chinese activity in the area.
2. **Strengthened US Access and Military Presence**: A potential outcome is increased US access to Greenland and an update to the existing 1951 defense agreement between the US and Denmark. This could entail additional NATO branding, new infrastructure, increased investment, and targeted cooperation on mineral resources.
3. **Missile Defense (Golden Dome):** Discussions have included Washington's proposed "Golden Dome" multilayered missile defense program, which Trump had previously stated would necessitate US ownership of Greenland for its implementation. Greenland's geographical position is considered crucial for deploying interceptors as part of such a system.
4. **No Tariffs**: As part of this framework, Trump withdrew his threat to impose tariffs on eight European nations that had opposed his initial attempts to purchase Greenland.
5. **Mineral Resources**: Greenland possesses significant deposits of critical raw materials, including rare earth metals. While Trump initially downplayed the importance of these minerals, a new arrangement

could potentially grant the US access to these resources.

What still isn't clear?

Despite the announcement of a "framework," many details and crucial aspects remain ambiguous or contested:

1. **Greenlandic and Danish Consent**: It is largely unclear whether Greenland or Danish authorities were fully consulted or have agreed to the specifics of any framework. Greenlandic and Danish officials have firmly stated that Greenland is not for sale, and that its sovereignty and mineral rights are not a matter for NATO to decide.
2. **Lack of Specifics**: Few concrete details about the negotiations, including dates, venues for future talks, or which European representatives would participate, have been publicly disclosed. Trump himself described the arrangement as "a little bit complex" and said it would be explained "down the line."
3. **Necessity of Ownership for Missile Defense**: The US administration has not provided a detailed public explanation as to why full US ownership of Greenland would be essential for the "Golden Dome" project, especially given the existing US military presence at Pituffik (formerly Thule Air Base).
4. **Denmark's Official Endorsement:** While Denmark has expressed openness to constructive dialogue on Arctic security, it has not explicitly endorsed any specific elements of the agreement publicized by Trump or Rutte.
5. **Long-term Viability**: Skepticism persists regarding the long-term stability of any deal, given Trump's history of shifting policy positions.
6. **Sovereignty over Military Bases and Mineral Extraction**: Media reports have speculated about potential compromises, such as the US gaining sovereignty over small areas for military bases or being able to extract rare earth minerals without Danish permission. However, these suggestions are met with strong opposition from Greenlandic officials.