

# Greenland: The lasting damage of Trump's tantrum

“So: Was it worth it?” asked Judson Berger in *National Review*. The long saga of President Trump's fixation with owning Greenland appeared to end last week with a merciful whimper. In a rambling address to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Trump not only withdrew his previous threats to annex Greenland through military force but also announced the cancellation of threatened tariffs against European nations who had opposed his plans to purchase the vast, semiautonomous island from Denmark. Instead, said Trump, he and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte had hammered out “the framework of a deal with respect to Greenland.” Trump claims the vague, still-unwritten deal will allow the construction of his dubious “Golden Dome” missile-defense system, enable American companies to pay for licenses to mine Greenland's minerals, and include “pockets” of U.S. sovereignty around an expanded number of military bases. That last claim is unconfirmed, said Douglas E. Schoen in *The Hill*, but the U.S. already had full military and commercial access to Greenland under a treaty signed in 1951. We've gained nothing we didn't already have, while Trump's “shock-and-awe” tactics have weakened NATO, emboldened Russia and China, and inflicted immense long-term damage to “America's geopolitical, economic, and security interests.”

Typically, Trump is framing his U-turn as a triumph of hardball negotiation, said Isaac Stanley-Becker and Jonathan Lemire in *The Atlantic*, but the reality is that “Europe got Trump to cave on Greenland.” Domestic politics no doubt also played a role—86% of Americans oppose invading a NATO ally, and even some usually supine congressional Republicans denounced Trump's expansionist ambitions. But the real pressure came from Europe, which



*A Danish naval ship off Greenland last week*

responded to Trump's bullying with steely, united defiance. A joint reconnaissance mission to Greenland by troops from eight European nations reportedly “rattled Trump,” as did a plunge in the U.S. stock market after the EU started selling U.S. bonds and threatened new, retaliatory tariffs. European “disgust” with the U.S. will long outlive Trump's presidency. But the real lesson of Trump's Greenland climbdown is that, as one EU official put it, Europe “is learning to bully back.”

So maybe Trump isn't an “all-powerful” dictator after all, said *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial. The liberal media has insisted that second-term Trump is a rampaging “Frankenstein's monster, unchained to do whatever he wants.” Yet now they also tell us he abandoned his designs on Greenland under pressure from public opinion, markets, allies, and fellow Republicans. Which is it? The reality is that despite his “over-the-top” style, Trump remains a “democratic leader in a constitutional republic,” constrained by the same forces as any president.

Is sanity one of those constraints? asked David French in *The New York Times*. Trump's conduct was “demonstrably irrational,” from claiming he had a “psychological need” to own Greenland to the “deranged and delusional” letter he sent Norway's prime minister, threatening to invade Greenland because “your Country decided not to give me the Nobel Peace Prize.” In a healthier democracy, said Michael Hicks in the Muncie, Ind., *Star Press*, Trump's unhinged behavior would be grounds for “impeachment or removal from office under the 25th Amendment.” But in our dysfunctional country, all that decent Americans can do is feel “ashamed, of our president and our nation.”