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Amerika'nın  
Kanada ve  
Grönland'ı İlhak  
Denemeleri**

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**Özet**

Kanada ve Danimarka, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD) için her zaman hayati bölgeler olmuştur. Uzun bir süre boyunca bu bölgeler, ABD hükümetleri tarafından dostane bir yaklaşımla ele alınmıştır. Esasen Danimarka ve Britanya gibi ilgili Avrupa ülkeleriyle kurulan güçlü ittifaklar, bölgeyi ortak bir kolektif güvenlik alanı haline getirmiştir. Ancak, ikinci Trump yönetimiyle birlikte ABD'nin güvenlik perspektifi, çok taraflılıktan tek taraflı bir yaklaşıma geçerek büyük bir kırılma yaşamıştır. İkinci Trump yönetimi bu alanları, ABD ulusal güvenliğinin bir uzantısı olarak görmüştür. Normal şartlarda ana akım uluslararası ilişkiler (UI) literatürü, bunun arkasındaki nedenleri jeopolitiğin bir parçası—yani Rusya ve Çin'in oluşturduğu gelecekteki potansiyel tehditler—olarak değerlendirirse de, ikinci Trump yönetiminin bu devletlerin oluşturduğu tehdidi abarttığı görülmektedir. Bu sebeple, makalede iki temel araştırma sorusuna odaklanmaktadır: (i) ikinci Trump yönetiminin Amerikan ulusal güvenliğini ulusal gurur merkezli, kimlik temelli bir meseleye nasıl dönüştürdüğü (ii) ve Kanada ile Grönland'ın algılanan ilhak girişimlerine nasıl tepki verdiği. Çalışmanın temel amacı, yalnızca maddi güvenlik çıkarlarına değil, aynı zamanda ulusal kimlik, gurur ve gelecekteki ittifak siyasetine yönelik kaygıların rolüne odaklanarak, geleneksel jeopolitik ve büyük güç analizlerinin ötesine geçen eleştirel bir katkı sunmaktır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Ontolojik Güvenlik, Kanada, Grönland, ABD Danimarka.*

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## **Betrayals, Insecurities and Anxieties: The American Annexation Attempts of Canada and Greenland**

### **Abstract**

Canada and Denmark has been always a vital areas for the United States (US). For a long time, these areas are treated by the US governments cordially. Basically, maintaining strong alliances with the respective European countries of Denmark and Britain made the region a common collective security area. However, with the second Trump administration, the security perspective of the US experienced a rupture from multilateralism to unilateral approach. Second Trump administration saw these areas as extension of the US national security. Normally, the mainstream international relations (IR) looked on the reasons behind as part of geopolitics namely the future potential threat posed by Russia and China, yet the second Trump administration appear to be exaggerated the threat they possess. Therefore, this article addresses two main research questions: (i) how the second Trump administration transformed American national security into an identity-based concern centered on national pride, (ii) and how Canada and Greenland responded to perceived annexation attempts. The main aim of the study is to provide a critical contribution that goes beyond traditional geopolitical and great power analyses by examining not only material security interests but also the role of national identity, pride, and anxieties over future alliance politics.

**Keywords:** *Ontological Security, Canada, Greenland, US, Denmark.*

## **1. Introduction**

Since Donald Trump's return to office in January 2025, the US foreign policy has followed a radical trajectory not witnessed even during his first administration. What has emerged is a form of radical unilateralism accompanied by an increasingly securitized foreign policy approach. Traditionally, the United States has pursued such measures primarily against its adversaries, such as Iran, China, Russia, and Venezuela. However, during Trump's second term, some of its allies have also begun to be treated as "threats to national security and American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere," most notably Canada and Greenland—two North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies that have been placed under constant pressure by the Trump administration through annexationist rhetoric.

Within the traditional realist paradigm, these measures taken by the Trump administration can be explained through aggressive expansionism, the state's desire for hegemony, and rational cost-benefit calculations (Gilpin, 1999; Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). However, what is being experienced goes beyond material interests alone. It also reflects a new form of psychological competition and a performative display of power through narrative construction and identity-building, as emphasized by ontological security theory.

### **1.1. Methodology**

In light of this problem, the research question consists of two dimensions: (i) how the Trump administration was able to transform American national security into an identity-based concern centered on national pride, and (ii) how Canada and Greenland have responded to annexation attempts. It is hypothesized that the Trump administration employed narratives of a "savior" role and a broader "American constitutional family" to persuade the governments and peoples of Canada and Greenland. Second, it is argued that, in order to protect their physical security against annexation, both Canada

and Greenland adopted narratives of betrayal and resistance to subjugation in order to preserve their national pride and identity.

To make a significant contribution to the international relations literature, the ontological security theory has been selected as the primary analytical framework, as it emphasizes narratives, continuity, and perceptions in shaping state identity rather than focusing solely on material power.

Yet, this study does not exclude the rationality side of the US foreign policy towards the Arctic security. The article also demonstrates the geopolitical side of the Trump administration's approach towards Canada and Greenland. In fact, the ontological security theory does not exclude rationality. The actors take decisions based on their evaluations that seen as rational. If it is fit their pre-assumptions, they act with respect to a certain direction.

In this article, the discourse analysis has been benefited. Namely, the speeches of the politicians, narratives of the local population and official state documents are part of the data, and accordingly, the aim is to combine the core arguments of the ontological security theory to the respective cases by examining Canada's brief historical relationship with the United States and its reactions to the Trump administration's annexation plans, and then the theory will be synthesized through analyzing Greenland's historical background and its contemporary resistance to the American hegemony. In addition, the aim is to make a futuristic scenario by using the ontological security theory in order to make assumptions about the trajectories that the US could potentially follow, such as isolationist rupture from the European alliance or eventual annexation of Canada and Greenland that might not be fiction.

## **2. The Literature on the Ontological Security Theory**

Up to the present day, realism has survived as the dominant theory in international relations. The theory offers a distinctly pessimistic

view of international politics, portraying the international system as anarchic and dominated by self-interested and power-seeking states. For Mearsheimer, states are driven by security maximization, and in pursuit of this goal they are prone to territorial and hegemonic expansion (Mearsheimer, 2001). For Waltz, states are constantly interested in hegemony; they form alliances to counter a prevailing dominant power, yet once that power is defeated, former alliance members go their separate ways in an attempt to become centers of hegemony themselves (Waltz, 1979). In Gilpin's account, when states perceive the international system as unfair, they are more likely to pursue expansion, as international politics becomes dominated by cost-benefit calculations (Gilpin, 1999).

However, the ontological security theory offers a more valuable alternative paradigm for understanding state behavior. The theory emerged during the cultural turn of the late 1990s and early 2000s, drawing on insights from psychoanalysis and sociology. The concept of ontological security originally revolved around the individual level and serves as a conceptual lens for understanding subjectivity (Giddens, 1991; Laing, 1990). Building particularly on Giddens's work, many international relations scholars have emphasized the importance of cognitive consistency and biographical continuity for political actors (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2020). Ontological security, in Giddens's terms, refers to "security as being" rather than "security as survival," which has traditionally dominated the field of international relations (Giddens, 1991).

A key distinction within the ontological security theory is between fear and anxiety. Conventional international relations theories focus primarily on fear, which is a basic emotion directed toward a clearly defined object and triggers adaptive responses such as fight or flight. For realists, fear is the principal driving force of state behavior, as uncertainty under anarchy leads states to fear one another's intentions. Anxiety, by contrast, lacks a clearly defined object and refers to a more diffuse sense of uncertainty regarding developments

that may threaten the subject's sense of self and continuity (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2020).

The ontological security theory thus focuses on the relationship between uncertainty, anxiety, and the capacity to maintain a stable sense of self. When anxiety regarding identity continuity emerges in contexts such as conflicts or systemic international crises, the risk of tension or violence increases, as uncertainty over identity generates ontological insecurity. Conversely, when actors feel ontologically secure in their self-conceptions, the likelihood of conflict decreases and is more likely to be replaced by cooperation and negotiation (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2017).

In international relations, states are composed of individual human beings, whose identities are subject to constant (re)formation. As Steele argues, states seek ontological security in order to maintain consistent self-concepts that affirm how they understand themselves (Steele, 2008). These self-concepts are constituted and sustained through narratives that provide a coherent sense of purpose and guide foreign policy behavior. In this sense, foreign policy becomes an exercise in constructing and maintaining self-images and self-narratives—an “imagined self”—through which states act in the international system.

Historical examples illustrate this dynamic. During the American Civil War (1861–1865), Britain considered intervening on behalf of the Confederacy. However, as the conflict increasingly came to be understood as a struggle against slavery, British policymakers recognized that supporting the Confederacy would undermine Britain's self-image as a democratic and “liberating” power in Europe. As a result, Britain refrained from intervention in order to preserve its ontological security and self-narrative (Steele, 2008).

Another important debate concerns the relationship between physical security and ontological security. For Tilly, states emerged primarily to protect the physical security of their populations by

developing strong economies and raising large, efficient armies capable of countering internal and external threats (Tilly, 1990). As Tilly famously coined, “war made the state and the state made wars.” However, not all members of a state necessarily benefit equally from this protection. In the process of creating centralized nation-states, governments construct particular forms of nationalism that privilege certain groups over others. Consequently, physical security is often selectively distributed, serving those groups deemed most useful for the construction and maintenance of state identity (Steele, 2008).

This discussion leads to a broader dilemma regarding whether states prioritize physical security or ontological security. Physical security concerns the protection of territorial integrity, whereas ontological security relates to the preservation of a stable sense of self (Rumelili and Adısönmez, 2020). Mainstream international relations theories tend to assume that states prioritize physical security and pursue national interests once territorial integrity is ensured. However, ontological security scholars challenge this assumption, arguing that states may at times prioritize the ontological security even at the expense of the physical security. In order to maintain coherent self-narratives and identity continuity, states may ignore material risks or even construct imagined threats to sustain their sense of self.

A frequently cited example is Belgium’s decision to resist Germany at the outset of the First World War. From a rationalist perspective, this choice jeopardized Belgium’s physical security. However, Steele argues that Belgium’s decision was driven by the desire to protect “Belgian pride” and national identity, illustrating how ontological security can outweigh physical survival concerns (Steele, 2008). A similar logic applies to the issue of official apologies in international politics. Great powers, or former great powers, often refuse to issue formal apologies for past crimes—even when doing so would not require territorial concessions or material reparations—because such apologies threaten their self-image. Instead, they construct

counterfactual narratives to justify their past actions and preserve ontological security (Rumelili and Adısönmez, 2020; Steele, 2008).

This logic is also evident in contemporary relations between the United States, Canada, and Denmark, the sovereign authority over Greenland. The United States has persistently promoted annexationist rhetoric by framing the issue in terms of its national security concerns, while Canada and Denmark emphasize narratives of national pride and resistance in order to avoid the humiliating consequences of subjugation. In the following section, the historical background and current state of relations between Canada and the United States will be examined, with particular attention to developments under the second Trump administration.

### **3. Canada’s Resistance to the “Little America” of the US**

#### **3.1. Historical Legacy of Economics on Canadian Ontological Security**

Canada’s modern history has been shaped by recurring trade shocks originating from its closest allies and neighbors. In 1846, Britain repealed the Corn Laws and adopted a free trade policy, a decision that effectively ended Canada’s preferential access to British markets and compelled Canada to turn toward the United States as an alternative trade partner. The economic impact of this shift was so significant that in 1849 hundreds of primarily English-speaking Canadian merchants and reformers signed the so-called Montreal Annexation Manifesto, which proposed annexation by the United States (Chan, 2025). However, the movement failed to gain widespread public support, largely because Canada regained access to American markets through the signing of the Elgin–Marcy Reciprocity Treaty in 1854.

The treaty established a period of reciprocal free trade between the two countries; however, it was terminated in 1866, partly due to American dissatisfaction with Britain over its perceived sympathy

toward the Confederacy during the American Civil War. The loss of preferential access to the US markets ultimately strengthened the case for Canadian Confederation, which was achieved the following year.

During the twentieth century, Canada experienced additional trade shocks originating from the United States, which periodically strained bilateral relations. The Smoot–Hawley Tariff Act of 1930, enacted during the Great Depression, prompted strong reactions in Canada and encouraged a temporary economic reorientation toward Britain. Similarly, during the Nixon administration, the United States imposed a 10 percent tariff on all imports, including those from Canada (Chan, 2025). Although these tariffs were short-lived, they triggered significant shifts in Canadian economic and foreign policy, which are discussed in the following sections.

In the twenty-first century, Canada–US trade relations again encountered friction. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 severely disrupted cross-border trade flows. Later, during Barack Obama’s presidency, the United States adopted the “Buy American” stimulus policy, which required federally funded projects to source iron, steel, and manufactured goods exclusively from domestic producers (Smith, Ray, Raymond, Sienna, and Lilly, 2018). While trade shocks from close allies are not typically expected to generate ontological insecurity, these developments had substantial repercussions for Canadian economic actors and caught the Canadian state off guard, producing a sense of profound betrayal. More importantly, these moments can be interpreted as critical junctures that shaped both elite and public perceptions in Canada.

From an ontological security perspective, such historical episodes of trade disruption and political friction prompted re-imaginings of Canadian state identity and selective reinterpretations of biographical continuity, as emphasized in the literature (Giddens, 1991). British free trade policies in 1846, the abrogation of

reciprocity in 1866, and the Nixon shocks of 1971 can thus be understood as generating existential anxiety for the Canadian state. These moments constituted pivotal turning points in Canadian national narratives and identity formation, closely tied to the emergence and consolidation of Canada as a political entity. At the same time, they intersected with shifts in American ontological security narratives—such as the invocation of a “Great American Constitutional Family” and references to Canada as a potential “51st state”—which form part of the United States’ own biographical narrative and increasingly clash with Canadian identity constructions.

### **3.2. Trump 2.0: The US and Canada’s Ontological Security**

The first weeks of President Trump’s second term introduced an annexationist rhetoric unprecedented in the past century and a half of Canada–US relations. From his election through his first month in office, President Trump repeatedly referred to Canada as the “51st state” in social media posts, including the circulation of a North American map depicting Canada covered by the American flag. He also consistently referred to then–Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as “Governor Trudeau” (Chan, 2025).

This rhetoric stands in sharp contrast to that of previous US administrations. Under earlier presidents, official discourse toward Canada was overwhelmingly framed in terms of alliance, friendship, and kinship. During the George W. Bush administration, for example, Canada was frequently described through a “family” narrative. Shortly after the September 11 attacks, President Bush remarked in reference to Canada:

*An amazing thing came up the other day. Somebody said to me, well you know, in your speech to Congress, there were some that looked affronted in Canada because I didn’t mention the name. I didn’t*

*necessarily think it was important to praise a brother—after all, we are talking about family* (The White House, 2001: n.p.).

Similar kinship narratives were employed by subsequent multilateralist presidents. Former President Barack Obama stated in one address that “*The United States and Canada are not simply allies, not simply neighbors; we are woven together like perhaps no other two countries in the world. We’re bound together by our societies, by our economies, by our families*” (White House, 2011: n.p.). Former President Joe Biden likewise described Americans and Canadians as “*two peoples and two countries who share one heart*” (White House, 2023). In general, the rhetoric of previous administrations—excluding Trump’s first term—emphasized shared values, collective goals, and enduring friendship.

By contrast, the second Trump administration’s “51st state” discourse represents a radical rupture in the biographical narratives of both American and Canadian foreign policy. The long-standing American discourse of kinship and partnership disappeared as the administration prioritized an “America First” approach over multilateral cooperation. For Canada, this shift was experienced as a profound betrayal. Until 2025, Canada had regarded its relationship with the United States as uniquely special—distinct even from its ties with Britain—and had consistently cherished this “special relationship” (Chan, 2025). Kinship, trust, and mutual affection constituted central components of Canada’s ontological security. Under Trump’s second term, however, Canada came to be treated as an instrument of American national interest rather than as a partner.

Referring to Canada as a “51st state” and to its prime minister as a “governor” reflects an imagined redefinition of US self-identity in foreign policy terms, in which Canada is framed primarily as a potential object of territorial expansion (Zellen, 2025). This reframing was widely interpreted in Canada as an act of betrayal, a

sentiment articulated clearly in one of former Prime Minister Trudeau's addresses:

*From the beaches of Normandy to the mountains of the Korean Peninsula, from the fields of Flanders to the streets of Kandahar, we have fought and died alongside you during your darkest hours. During the Iranian hostage crisis, those 444 days, we worked around the clock from your embassy to get your innocent compatriots home. During the summer of 2005, when Hurricane Katrina ravaged your great city of New Orleans, or mere weeks ago, when we sent water bombers to tackle the wildfires in California—during the day the world stood still, September 11, 2001, when we provided refuge to stranded passengers and planes—we were always there, standing with you, grieving with you, the American people (Chan, 2025: 173).*

This address draws heavily on shared historical narratives, emphasizing decades of solidarity and sacrifice. It highlights the perceived rupture between two countries that had repeatedly stood together, now seemingly dismissed by the United States without regard for their shared past.

In light of these developments, Canada faces three possible strategic options: maintaining the status quo, pursuing deeper integration with the United States, or adopting a comprehensive long-term strategy to strengthen its economy and other dimensions of national life in order to reduce both material and identity-based vulnerability. Among these options, Canada appears to have pursued the third. The country found itself largely unprepared for the transformation of its long-term ally, as the United States retreated from its role as a global

leader and instead sought exclusive dominance over the Western Hemisphere—an approach reminiscent of nineteenth-century US foreign policy. American pressure on Canada through tariffs further intensified this challenge. According to one analysis, “*a hypothetical 25 percent American tariff on Canadian imports would deal a major blow to Canada’s economy, with predictions of sharp GDP decline and recession*” (Mann, 2025: 23). Key industries such as aluminum, steel, and lumber—highly dependent on access to the US market—would be particularly affected under sustained tension (Mann, 2025).

These combined military and economic pressures triggered a renewed Canadian identity discourse centered on Atlanticism. Atlanticism emphasizes Canada’s Atlantic identity and its commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), prioritizing transatlantic solidarity while resisting Anglo-American unilateralism. The objective is to enhance Canada’s standing in international politics by strengthening ties with European allies. Former Prime Minister Trudeau initiated this rhetorical shift following the Trump administration’s “governor” remarks. Although this confrontational environment ultimately contributed to Trudeau’s resignation—partly due to perceptions that he was ill-prepared to defend Canadian interests—his response set an important precedent (Zellen, 2025).

His successor, Prime Minister Mark Carney, further advanced Atlanticist rhetoric. In one address, Carney asserted: “*The Americans want our resources, our water, our land, our country. Think about that. If they succeeded, they would destroy our way of life*” (Chan, 2025: 176). The Prime Carney like his predecessor labeled by the President Trump as “governor” when he threatened Canada for 100 percent tariffs on Canadian imports due to Canada’s getting closer with the EU states as well as with China (Bacon, 2026). President himself made a tough response to that move. He stated “*Canada lives because of the United States. Remember that, Mark the next time you make your statements*” (Bacon, 2026: n.p.).

The Prime Minister responded that speech which overlooks the Canadian identity by asserting “*Canada doesn’t live because of the United States. Canada thrives because we are Canadian*” (Carney, 2026).

This discourse reflects a clash between Canada’s emerging Atlanticist identity and the United States’ renewed “America First” posture. Canada is increasingly balancing against US pressure by aligning more closely with European partners. Some commentators have even suggested that Canada has become “more European than North American” and should consider joining the European Union (The Economist, 2025). In a similar vein, the French President Emmanuel Macron referred to Canada as “*the most European of non-European countries*” (Chan, 2025: 177).

Taken together, these developments suggest that the Trump administration’s “Little America” discourse has introduced another major trauma into Canadian political history. This trauma is likely to shape the post-Trump ontological security of both Canada and the United States, with lasting consequences for bilateral relations. Importantly, the rupture is not confined to political elites but extends to society at large. According to a poll conducted on March 4, 2025, by Alyrle and Colleto, 60 percent of respondents held a negative impression of the United States—higher than the negative perception of China at 58 percent. By contrast, the European Union was viewed positively by 68 percent of respondents, while only 34 percent expressed favorable views of the United States (Alyrle and Colleto, 2025). These findings suggest that the “Trump shock” may have hardened public attitudes in ways that complicate long-term efforts to repair the US image in Canada.

In short, when viewed through the realist concept of fear and the ontological security framework’s notion of anxiety, the fear dimension is evident in concerns over the potential economic damage that American tariffs could inflict on the Canadian economy,

as well as in apprehensions—however remote—regarding the long-term possibility of annexation. Yet, anxiety has been more significant in Canadian politics, particularly in relation to a perceived sense of betrayal and the consequent redefinition of alliance politics from a North American identity toward a more European-oriented identity.

#### **4. Greenland: Becoming a Tool for Trump’s Securitizing Agenda**

Compared to Canada, Greenland has been more directly affected by the Trump administration’s annexationist discourse. In President Trump’s worldview, Greenland is framed as a matter of national security for the United States, as his imagined ontological security narrative portrays the island as being increasingly surrounded by Russian and Chinese naval activity. To understand how this perception has emerged, it is necessary to first examine Greenland’s historical background and then analyze the contemporary discursive struggle surrounding its status.

##### **4.1. The Brief History of Greenland and US Relations**

Greenland is the world’s largest island and a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark. The first European presence was recorded when Norse explorers arrived and established settlements; however, a permanent European presence began in 1721, when Denmark formally colonized Greenland, a status that has continued ever since (Siddiqui, 2025). United States interest in Greenland dates back to 1867, when then-Secretary of State William H. Seward proposed purchasing Greenland alongside the acquisition of Alaska. Although this proposal was not realized, it came close to being implemented (Mosbey, 2025).

In the early twentieth century, diplomatic discussions emerged concerning US interest in Greenland and the Danish West Indies. These negotiations ultimately resulted in the US acquisition of the Danish West Indies—now the US Virgin Islands—while Greenland remained under Danish sovereignty. During this period, the Wilson

administration declined to pursue the purchase of Greenland, and Britain, which had also expressed interest due to Greenland's proximity to Canada, ultimately recognized Danish sovereignty as well. Consequently, both the United States and Britain formally acknowledged Denmark's authority over Greenland.

During the Second World War, Denmark's occupation by Nazi Germany raised significant strategic concerns regarding Greenland. Given its geographical proximity to Canada, the United States framed Greenland within the scope of the Monroe Doctrine, which aimed to preserve American dominance in the Western Hemisphere. As a result, the United States assumed responsibility for Greenland's defense and administration throughout the war (Mosbey, 2025). Following the end of World War II, the United States returned administrative control to Denmark but retained a military presence on the island. As part of George Kennan's containment strategy, the United States deployed strategic bombers along the periphery of the Soviet Union, further solidifying Greenland's role in American security planning (Mosbey, 2025).

These developments must also be understood in light of the enduring legacy of colonialism shaping relations between Denmark and Greenland. Over more than two centuries, the two societies have become deeply intertwined through shared institutions, social norms, and cultural practices. Today, many Danes and Greenlanders—and a substantial number of Greenlandic youth—migrate to Denmark for education and employment opportunities. Despite holding Danish citizenship, many Greenlanders experience feelings of subordination rooted in Denmark's colonial legacy (Miller, 2025). Moreover, Greenlanders frequently encounter prejudice within the Danish society, where they are often stereotyped as belonging to isolated, traditional communities marked by social challenges and substance abuse. Conversely, Danes residing in Greenland also report experiencing discrimination and hostility (Miller, 2025).

This mutual tension reflects a broader clash of narratives between the two populations. Denmark has long cultivated an image of “Nordic exceptionalism,” portraying itself as a benevolent and humane colonial power committed to Greenland’s development and prosperity (Miller, 2025). Nevertheless, this narrative has not prevented Greenlanders from pursuing an independence agenda. Debates over Greenland’s constitutional future remain ongoing, with strong public support for independence. This sentiment was evident in the 2008 referendum on self-government, in which 75.54 percent of voters supported greater autonomy (Zellen, 2025). Greenland’s pursuit of independence has largely proceeded through bilateral negotiations with Denmark. In 1979, Greenland was granted home rule, and with the adoption of the Self-Government Act in 2009, it achieved its current status as a semi-autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark.

To this day, Greenlanders continue to debate and pursue alternative models of sovereignty, ranging from a Westphalian nation-state to forms of indigenous self-determination. This unresolved constitutional and identity question has recently been exploited by the second Trump administration as an opportunity to advance its annexationist discourse.

#### **4.2. The American Territorial Ambitions for Greenland and Securitizing Narrative**

As noted above, US interest in Greenland dates back to the late nineteenth century; however, renewed attention emerged in 2019 with the publication of the Department of Defense (DoD)’s Arctic Strategy. This document articulated the strategic rationale for The US defense policy toward Greenland, stating:

*The North American Arctic region comprises the northern approaches to the homeland and includes sovereign U.S. territory, Alaska—home to significant*

*U.S. defense infrastructure—and the sovereign territory of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, including Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark’s autonomous territory of Greenland (DoD, 2019: 3).*

The 2019 strategy further emphasized that Greenland is “vital to homeland defense” (DoD, 2019). In this context, Greenland was explicitly framed as a critical geopolitical asset, thereby expanding the United States’ national security perception beyond its traditional boundaries. This framing reflects what can be interpreted as an expanded version of the Monroe Doctrine, in which insecurity is increasingly perceived as originating in the Arctic region. The Arctic is portrayed as the northern approach to the United States and as a potential vector for threats to homeland security, functioning as a strategic corridor between the Arctic and the North Atlantic. The region’s importance is both concern for protecting American national interests and as well as the keeping the American pride

Given this heightened securitization, it is unsurprising that President Trump reiterated his ambitions regarding Greenland when announcing his nominee for US ambassador to Denmark in December 2025. On that occasion, he revived the narrative of incorporating Greenland into the “American constitutional family,” asserting that “*for purposes of national security and freedom throughout the world, the United States of America feels that ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity*” (Zellen, 2025). President Trump further integrated this claim into his broader “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) rhetoric. In his framing, the acquisition of Greenland was presented as serving the collective good of the “Free World,” enhancing safety, strength, and peace. Consequently, the MAGA narrative was symbolically extended into “Make Greenland Great Again,” portraying

annexation as a defensive necessity against perceived Russian and Chinese threats.

A closer examination of official discourse also reveals the construction of a constitutive identity narrative directed at Greenlanders themselves. In his address to Congress on March 5, 2025, President Trump declared: “*We strongly support your right to determine your own future, and if you choose, we welcome you into the United States of America*” (Miller, 2025: 40). This statement framed Greenland’s potential incorporation into the United States as voluntary and consistent with democratic self-determination, implicitly invoking inclusion within the broader American constitutional family. However, this conciliatory tone was immediately followed by a more coercive assertion:

*We need Greenland for national security—and even international security—and we’re working with everybody involved to try and get it. But we need it, really, for world security. And I think we’re going to get it. One way or the other, we’re going to get it* (Miller, 2025: 41).

The phrase “one way or the other” signals a markedly more aggressive stance, implicitly suggesting that all means—including military force—remain on the table. The underlying message is clear: rejection by Greenlanders would not ultimately prevent US acquisition. This rhetoric reflects a condition of ontological insecurity within the Trump administration, whereby the failure of external actors to recognize the United States’ self-defined identity as a global protector generates tension and coercive posturing. This dynamic is further reinforced by Trump’s promise that “*We will keep you safe. We will make you rich. Together, we will take Greenland to heights like you have never thought possible before*” (Miller, 2025, 42). In this narrative, the United States is cast as a “savior,” while

Greenlanders are portrayed as incapable of ensuring their own security—an imagery that carries strong colonial undertones and implicitly frames Greenland as an “Orient” requiring rescue from Denmark, Russia, and China.

This securitizing and colonial discourse was further reinforced by US Secretary of State James David Vance during his visit to the Pituffik Space Base in Greenland. In his remarks, Vance characterized Denmark and Greenland as “allies that have failed to keep pace,” accusing Denmark of being “underinvested” and “unsuccessful” in managing its responsibilities toward Greenland in the face of Russian and Chinese threats (Fox 29 Philadelphia, 2025). His speech constructed a dichotomy between “brave Americans” and European allies who had allegedly fallen behind, while simultaneously describing Greenland as a “beautiful land with beautiful people,” echoing President Trump’s paternalistic rhetoric (Fox 29 Philadelphia, 2025).

In sum, the US discourse toward Greenland under the second Trump administration combines a securitizing logic with a colonial narrative. National security is consistently invoked as a justificatory pretext, extending even to implicit threats of force, an option the administration has never explicitly ruled out. From this perspective, continued Greenlandic resistance to American dominance in the Western Hemisphere is framed as unacceptable, reinforcing President Trump’s repeated assertions that the United States would acquire Greenland “one way or another” if necessary (Holland, Mason, and Ericson, 2026).

### **4.3. Greenland’s Response Main Heading of the Article**

Amid increasing US pressure, Greenlanders’ primary concern centers on physical security, particularly the preservation of sovereignty. The loss of sovereignty would not only undermine territorial integrity but would also signify a humiliating subordination to colonial rule for Greenland’s Indigenous

population. Given the strong desire to distance themselves from Danish colonial authority, Greenlandic officials have articulated a clear and powerful counter-narrative. Most notably, they have asserted that “*Greenland is not for sale. The question has been asked and firmly answered by the government of Greenland*” (Miller, 2025, 45).

This statement directly references an alternative US strategy for acquiring Greenland—namely, a proposed purchase rather than military annexation. The United States has repeatedly signaled interest in buying Greenland from Denmark, prompting Greenlandic leaders to warn Copenhagen against any such transaction conducted without Greenland’s consent. In this framing, Greenland positions both Denmark and the United States as actors capable of marginalizing its agency, rejecting any unilateral action that disregards the authority of the Greenlandic government and the will of its people.

Given Greenland’s semi-autonomous status and the strong public support for independence, narratives centered on Westphalian sovereignty and indigenous self-determination have become the primary drivers of contemporary Greenlandic nationalism (Holland et al., 2026). Consequently, the declaration that “Greenland is not for sale” functions not merely as a policy statement but as an expression of a newly consolidated national identity. It operates as a direct counter-narrative to the Trump administration’s discourse of the “Great American Constitutional Family,” reaffirming Greenland’s claim to political autonomy, dignity, and self-defined sovereignty.

In summary, in contrast to the Canadian case, the realist fear factor is more strongly manifested in the Greenlandic context, as the prospect of losing sovereignty appears more credible. Moreover, fear operates in conjunction with anxiety, since the loss of sovereignty would entail the subordination of Greenlanders to a form of American colonial rule. Consequently, the future of Greenlandic

identity is contingent upon the preservation of sovereignty—namely, the protection of the country’s physical security and political autonomy. At the same time, significant uncertainty surrounds Greenland’s future, particularly with regard to whether it will be annexed or instead achieve full independence from Denmark.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study has examined the United States’ changing stance toward Canada, Greenland, and Denmark by focusing on two central questions: how the Trump administration transformed American national security into an identity-based concern centered on national pride, and how Canada and Greenland responded to annexationist pressures.

The findings demonstrate that, from an ontological security perspective, this period marked a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy. Threat perceptions were expanded beyond traditional external adversaries to include neighboring territories. Annexationist discourse toward Canada and Greenland was justified through narratives emphasizing the risk of future Russian and Chinese influence. However, this discourse was not driven solely by strategic calculations. It was also shaped by an effort to restore American national pride and symbolically reclaim the United States’ historical sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere.

The securitization of these territories and the assumption of a “protective” role over their populations became central components of this strategy. Nevertheless, the intensity of pressure differed. Canada was subjected primarily to rhetorical pressure, including humiliating narratives such as being referred to as a “governor” or a potential “51st state.” In contrast, Greenland faced more explicit coercive signaling, including discussions that did not exclude the potential use of military force, reflecting both geopolitical and identity-based motivations.

These policies generated counter-anxieties in both cases. Canada responded by recalibrating its foreign policy orientation. It moved toward a more Atlanticist and European-centered identity, diversified its diplomatic alignments, and adopted a more multilateral strategy to reduce dependence on the United States. This included cautiously expanding relations with other global actors, including China, in order to avoid overreliance on a single strategic reference group.

In Greenland, annexationist rhetoric intensified fears of subordination and strengthened the independence movement from Denmark. Anti-colonial narratives directed at both Denmark and the United States gained greater prominence. This process reinforced Indigenous identity and contributed to a nation-building dynamic aimed at achieving full sovereignty in a Westphalian sense.

Although U.S. rhetoric may soften in the post-Trump period, the ontological insecurity produced by this episode is unlikely to disappear. The anxieties surrounding sovereignty, identity, and political autonomy in both Canada and Greenland are likely to persist. Canada may continue deepening its European orientation and maintaining a diversified security strategy, while Greenland's independence movement may gain further momentum.

Overall, the study shows that annexationist discourse did not simply alter strategic alignments; it reshaped identity constructions, alliance perceptions, and security narratives. These dynamics offer important avenues for further research within the framework of critical security studies.

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