

# Why Does Trump Want Greenland

## Why In News

- **United States President-elect Donald Trump** has the world in a tizzy with his proclamations on territorial expansion. He **wants to buy Greenland, regain control of the Panama Canal** and make Canada the 51st state of the United States. U.S. President-elect Donald Trump says he **wants to make Greenland a part of the United States** and does not rule out using military or economic power to get Denmark to hand over the mineral-rich and strategically important island.



- "Greenland is an **incredible place, and the people will benefit tremendously** if, and when, it **becomes part of our Nation**," Trump said in a Truth Social post on. "This is a deal that must happen," Trump said as his son, Donald Trump Jr., paid a private visit to Greenland.

## Where Is Greenland?

- Greenland, the **world's largest island, is located** in the Arctic. It is the world's most sparsely populated territory. About **56,000 people live there**, mostly indigenous Inuit people.
- **About 80% of its territory is covered** by ice, meaning most people live on the south-western coast around the capital, Nuuk.

**Countries contend control of the Arctic Ocean**

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said on Tuesday he wants to make mineral-rich, strategically placed Greenland a part of the United States.



By Alessandro Parodi and Johan Ahlander

- An **autonomous territory of Denmark**, it is also home to Danish and US military bases. The economy is mainly based on fishing. Large subsidies from the Danish government account for about a fifth of GDP.
- In recent years, there has been **increased interest in Greenland's natural resources**, including mining for rare earth minerals, uranium and iron. These may become more accessible as global warming leads to some of the ice covering Greenland to melt.

## What Is Greenland's Status

- **Located geographically within North America**, Greenland has been controlled by Denmark – **nearly 3,000km (1,860 miles) away** – for about **300 years**.
- The island was governed as a colony until the **mid-20th Century**. For much of this time, it remained isolated and poor.
- **In 1953, it was made part of the Kingdom of Denmark** and Greenlanders became Danish citizens.



- In **1979**, a referendum on home rule gave **Greenland** control of most policies within the territory, with Denmark retaining control over foreign affairs and defence.

## Why Does Greenland Matter To The US

- US has long maintained a **security interest in Greenland**. After **Nazi Germany occupied mainland Denmark** during World War II, the US invaded Greenland, establishing military and radio stations across the territory.
- After the war, **US forces remained in Greenland**. Pituffik Space Base, formerly known as **Thule Air Base**, has been operated by the US ever since.



- **In 1951, a defence agreement** with Denmark granted the US a significant role in the defence of the territory, including the right to build and maintain military bases.
- "If Russia were to send missiles towards the US, the shortest route for nuclear weapons would be via the **North Pole and Greenland**," said Marc Jacobsen, an associate professor at the Royal Danish Defence College.
- "That's why the **Pituffik Space Base is immensely important** in defending the US." China and Russia have begun building up their Arctic military capabilities in recent years, according to an Arctic Institute paper. The paper called for the US to further develop its presence in the Arctic to counter its rivals.



- On Wednesday, **Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen** said Denmark was open to discussions with the US, adding that Washington had "legitimate" interests in the region.
- "**We see a Russia that is arming itself. We see a China** that is also starting to take an interest," Rasmussen said.
- Trump is also likely **interested in the mining potential across** Greenland's vast landmass, Mr Jacobsen added.
- "Today, of **special interest are the rare earth minerals**, which have not yet been mined but are in the southern part of Greenland. These are immensely important in all kinds of technologies, from cell phones to wind turbines."



## Does The US Want Full Control Of Greenland

- Trump has claimed that **control of Greenland is essential** to US national and economic security. Though the president-elect's rhetoric may seem unusual, for over a century a succession of US presidents have tried to gain control of Greenland.



- "The US has tried a few times to push the Danes out of Greenland and take it over as part of the US, or at least to have full security tutelage of Greenland," said Lukas Wahden, the author of **66° North**, a newsletter on Arctic security.

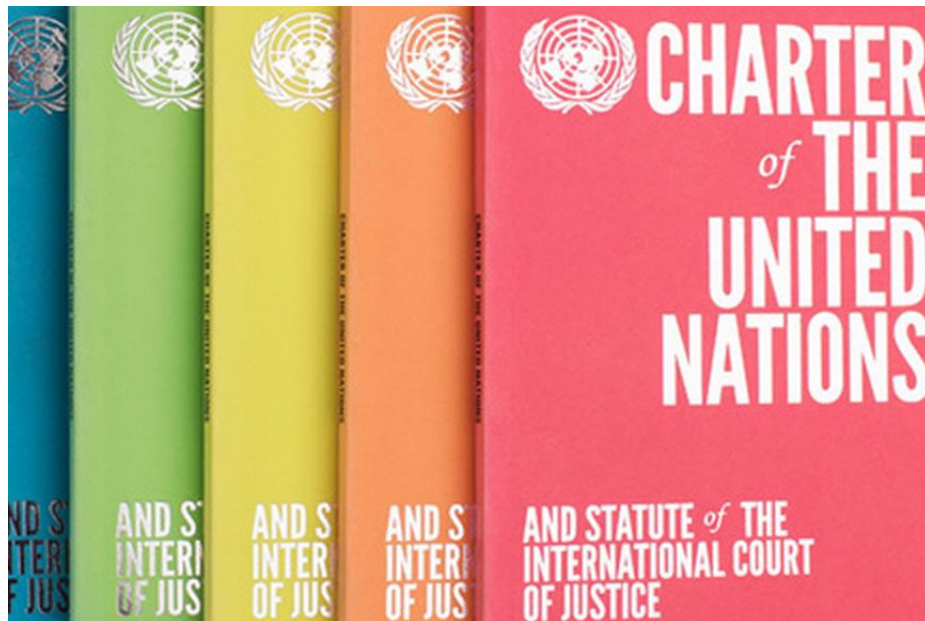
- In 1867, after buying Alaska from Russia, US Secretary of State William H Seward led negotiations to buy Greenland from Denmark, but failed to reach any agreement.



- In 1946, the US offered to pay \$100m (equivalent to \$1.2bn; £970m today) for the territory, judging that it was vital for national security, but the Danish government refused.
- Trump also tried to buy Greenland during his first term. Both Denmark and the Greenlandic government rejected the 2019 proposal, saying: "Greenland is not for sale."

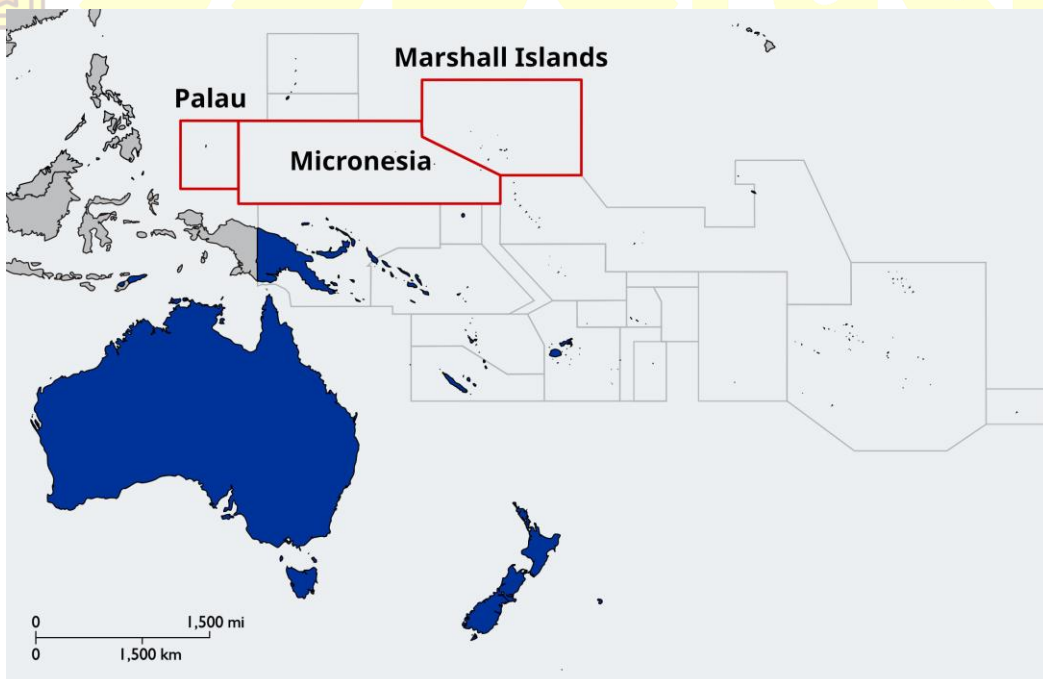
## What Does The Law Say

- In present times, the “sale” of a country is much more complicated given international laws that prioritise “self-determination”. The first article of the **United Nations Charter states** that its purposes include, “To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.”
- **Self-determination refers to the ability of the people** to choose how to govern themselves. This was made clear by the prime ministers of Denmark and Greenland as well.



## What If Greenland Becomes Independent

- If **Greenland becomes independent**, it could choose to become associated with the United States. While the majority of Greenlanders want independence, few see **full independence as viable given their economic dependence** on Denmark, which is part of the affluent European Union.



- One option could be to **form a so-called "free association" pact** with the United States, similar to the status of Pacific island nations Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau.

- **"Greenland is talking about becoming independent** from Denmark, but no Greenlanders want to just switch to a new colonial master," said Ulrik Pram Gad, a senior researcher and expert on Greenland.
- He **finds it unlikely Greenland will vote** for independence without ensuring the welfare of its population.