

arteDISTRIBUTION

the ultimate reference for factual documentaries
presents

GREENLAND **THE ICY ELDORADO**

Directed by Jean-Yves Cauchard & Vivien Meltz
Produced by Temps Noir & ARTE France

52'



SYNOPSIS

Greenland has recently become a major geopolitical issue opposing the United States, Europe, Russia and China due to its strategic location and mineral wealth. What choice will the Greenlanders make? How far will Donald Trump go? The new dynamics surrounding Greenland are, along with the war in Ukraine, among the two major challenges Trump has posed to Europe ever since he became president of the United States for the second time.

The U.S. president's intention to annex Greenland, was announced on Truth Social by Donald Trump himself back in December 2024. What seemed like a grotesque provocation at first, quickly escalated into a major geopolitical conflict involving Washington, Copenhagen and Brussels. Between economic threats, military tensions and fake news, this documentary reveals how this icy island, holding key strategic assets, became a hotspot in the battle for strategic dominance. The United States' sudden interest in Greenland reveals the impacts of ice melt on the world: new shipping routes, easy access to minerals, and the global race for the Arctic. Through this narrative mixing dark humor and thorough analysis, the film explores the dynamics of domination, the future of polar territories, and the rising tensions occurring in an increasingly multipolar world.



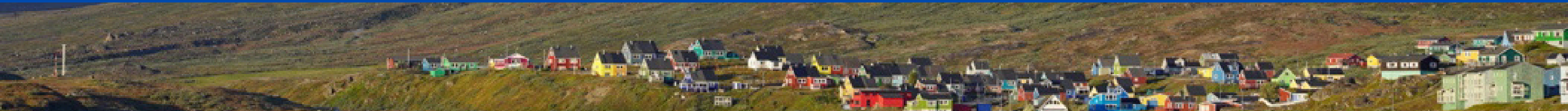


THE PLAN

On December 22, 2024, Donald Trump, who had just been elected president of the U.S. for the second time, put his controversial plan of annexing Greenland back on the table. He announced his plan through a post he made on Truth Social. This project he had already spoken about back in 2019, raised great concerns internationally. The Trump administration, through statements made by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, insists on the strategic necessity of such an annexation. Given the pressure it was facing, Denmark, which retains authority over Greenland, took action. Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen summoned Danish business leaders, preparing for a trade war with the United States, its largest non-European trade partner.

The threat goes beyond that. It is said that Donald Trump even considered using military force. The European Union took action with country leaders who spoke about sending troops to Greenland. Frederiksen then went on a diplomatic tour around Europe looking for international support. There, Greenland's Prime Minister Múte Egede, stood by his strong opposition to Trump's plan saying, 'Greenland is not for sale'. However, concerns started growing as parliamentary elections were to be held in April, and Trump's supporters alongside his son were seen handing out gifts and propaganda in Nuuk. Meanwhile, online fake news is skyrocketing with the help of foreign actors like China and Russia.

Greenland, a large Arctic island, rich in strategic resources (hydrocarbons, uranium, rare-earth elements), became a central issue in 21st-century geopolitical rivalries. Global warming is facilitating greater access to strategic resources and enabling the emergence of new shipping routes, attracting interest from global powers.





THE STAKES

1) Is Greenland the real center of the world?

The geostrategic and military challenges

Greenland holds a key geostrategic position, one that has long been underestimated because of our classic representation of a world revolving around Europe. Seen from the North Pole, the island appears like a hub between North America, Europe, Russia, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic Ocean. The United States were quick to fully comprehend its importance, Thule Air Base, which was founded in 1943 and rediscovered by Jean Malaurie in 1951, is proof of this. During the Cold War, it held a key position regarding the U.S.'s nuclear defense. Known today as Pituffik Space Base now falls under the U.S. Space Force and still plays a key role in intelligence gathering thanks to both its spy radars and satellites.

The United States have in fact, military sovereignty over Greenland thanks to an agreement they signed with Denmark in 1951 and amended in 2004 so the defense of Greenland could be added. The island is also a strategic checkpoint of the GIUK (Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom) gap. The gap is essential for anyone who wants to have control over access to the North Atlantic Ocean. In the face of the renewed military presence of Russia in the Arctic, something that has been happening since the early 2010s, tensions are rising. China, an occasional ally of Russia, no longer hides its Arctic ambitions either. Greenland has then become a strategic hotspot in the great power rivalry in the Arctic.





THE STAKES

2) The new ice silk roads?

Tomorrow's trade stakes and flows

Global warming has had quite devastating effects in the Arctic region. As a result, the Greenland ice sheet is rapidly cracking, having already lost over 5 billion tons of ice over the last twenty years. This change deeply transformed the region, turning the Arctic Ocean into an increasingly navigable area. This evolution is about to turn Greenland into a strategic hub for global maritime trade.

The Arctic's new shipping routes, which are shorter than the conventional itineraries, represent a major economic asset. For instance, for a trip from Shanghai to Rotterdam, if you travel through the Arctic Ocean, it's 4 000 kilometers shorter than if you take the Suez Canal. Traveling through the Arctic Ocean then allows to save time and reduce shipping costs, while avoiding the risks of obstruction and geopolitical instability, something that often happens in the Red Sea.

This evolution raises interest from global powers. Donald Trump is not only interested in Greenland, but he is also interested in the Panama Canal. For its part, China includes the Arctic Ocean into what it calls its “new silk roads”, betting big on the North-Eastern waterways (through Russia) and North-Western ones (through Canada), both of which are still legally controversial.

Although icebreakers are still needed for Arctic navigation, it is estimated that 25% of the Asia-Europe maritime traffic could be rerouted toward this region eventually. Greenland is thus becoming a coveted territory, a key territory for the future of global Arctic maritime trade. However, this project requires substantial investments in port facilities.





THE STAKES

3) The race to critical raw materials?

The challenges related to strategic resources

Greenland keeps on raising interest internationally not only because of its strategic location and its emerging shipping routes, but also and more importantly because of its mineral riches. Global warming has now made it easier to have access to many rare and valuable minerals such as gold, diamonds, uranium, rare-earth elements, lithium, copper, nickel, gas and oil. The island is said to hold 37 of the 50 critical minerals the United States considers essential to produce modern technologies. China has control over most of those minerals.

World giants like China, Australia, Canada and the United States make massive investments. The American startup called KoBold Metals, a company backed by Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos, is a mineral explorer and is particularly interested in a large cobalt and copper deposit. The European Union also entered the race when it signed a strategic partnership with Greenland in 2023 and opened a new office in Nuuk in early 2024.

However, all of these projects are beginning to face growing local opposition. Greenlanders, who are deeply attached to both their surroundings and lifestyle, are afraid of the consequences mining could have on the environment. A controversial project that was supposed to take shape in Kvanefield was abandoned, leading the previous government to collapse. The coming elections that are to be held in April will then play a decisive role and could almost be seen as a referendum where people will decide what the future of the territory will look like. Will they choose to protect the environment? Or, will they give in to the frenzy of the resource rush?



arte DISTRIBUTION

the ultimate reference for factual documentaries



Joséphine LETANG

**Head of International Distribution &
Marketing**

j-letang@arteFrance.fr



Alec HERRMANN

Head of Catalog

a-herrmann@arteFrance.fr



Audrey KAMGA

a-kamga@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

Canada, USA, South America,
Israel & MENA Region



Alexandra MARGUERITE

a-marguerite@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Eastern
Europe, Asia, language versions

Africa: a-morel@arteFrance.fr



Franka SCHWABE

f-schwabe@arteFrance.fr

Sales Manager

Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland,
Netherlands, Scandinavia, Iceland, Australia, New Zealand