

Annexation redux: Trump's expansionist threats unmask longstanding policy

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January 13, 2025



The Trump jet is seen in Nuuk, Greenland, on Tuesday, January 7, 2025,

carrying the U.S. president-elect's son Donald Trump Jr. on a private visit.

In the past few weeks, we've seen a buzz in the corporate media about President-elect Donald Trump's inflammatory rhetoric on annexation.

As Trump approaches his second term in office, he has ramped up his talk about territorial expansion. His rhetoric has thus far targeted Canada, Mexico, Panama, and, most prominently, Greenland.

Trump undoubtedly represents a sector of the U.S. ruling class that believes in more overt and public U.S. domination of the Western Hemisphere. That said, it should be made clear that the U.S. ruling class has had its eyes and hands on all the places Trump targeted for decades.

Trump's language marks a bit of an increase in intensity, but the policies he talks about aren't exactly fresh objectives for the U.S. ruling class. Since the early 19th century, the United States has maintained a consistent policy of expanding its interests, whether it be economically, territorially, or militarily.

During the colonial period, the U.S. used a settler movement driven by [manifest destiny](#) propaganda to expand West into Indigenous and Mexican land. Eventually, the military backed that settler movement. Parasitic ruling class families, such as the Vanderbilts and the Rockefellers, followed the settler and military expansion with massive investments in the stolen land.

The wealth plundered from the manifest destiny period (colonization) allowed the U.S. to take steps toward becoming an imperial power. It is in this form, the imperialist form, that the U.S. has spread its fingers around the world. Donald Trump simply aims to maintain that policy. This rhetoric is a minor unmasking of reality. The history of Mexico, Canada, Panama, and Greenland bears out this point.

U.S. King in North America

After World War II, the U.S. asserted itself as the dominant imperialist power after the widespread destruction in Europe and East Asia. As part of its newfound hegemony, the U.S. began exercising increased economic and diplomatic power against its neighbors.

In many ways, Canada has been a territory of the U.S. for decades. The two countries' economies, particularly their [supply chains](#), are completely integrated. Billions of dollars in goods and services and hundreds of thousands of people cross the U.S.-Canadian border every year.

However, all this business is done on terms set by the United States through the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, now rebranded as the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. On top of economic control, the United States military and diplomatic agendas are almost always matched by Canada.

The Canadian military joined the U.S. military in its wars on Korea, Iraq, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan. In fact, the militaries work so closely that Canadian military brass floated the idea of [complete integration](#) into the U.S. military in 2017. Even in the current period, Canada has followed the United States' example, pumping [\\$9 billion](#) into NATO's war in Ukraine.

For as much influence the U.S. has exercised in Canada, it pales in comparison to the ravages of imperialism enacted upon Mexico and its people. U.S. dominance over Mexico began with the theft of over 55% of Mexico's territory in 1848, not including Texas. At the end of its provoked war against Mexico, the U.S. asserted horrendous terms on Mexico through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

In the 20th century, Mexico was held hostage by U.S. corporations that operated maquiladoras in the northern provinces and paid no taxes to the Mexican

government. These same mega corporations scuttle any attempt in Mexico to empower workers or maintain Mexico's resources for the Mexican people.

As bad as NAFTA was for Canada, it was far worse for Mexico. NAFTA completely eliminated Mexican tariffs on imported U.S. goods, allowing U.S. corporations to flood Mexico with consumer goods.

In terms of security and foreign policy, the Mexican government has long been forced to adhere to U.S. provocations against other Latin American countries. Further, the U.S. has forced Mexico to spend billions on a futile "war on drugs." U.S. imperialism has used the leverage of foreign aid money and IMF loans as a trump card over any potential Mexican attempts to nationalize its resources or assert independence from the U.S.

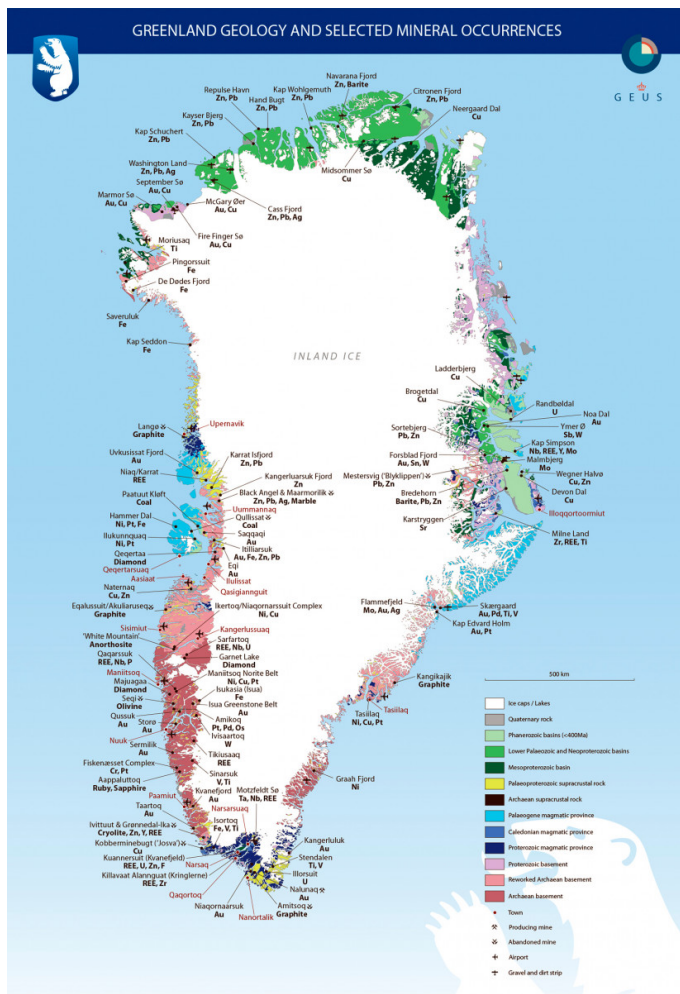
All this is to say, Trump's rhetoric isn't a new escalation against neighbors and allies. It is simply the U.S. ruling class demanding more in tribute payments from countries that it already dominates.

Panama intervention: nothing new

The government of Panama has long been forced to serve U.S. interests regarding the administration and control of the Panama Canal. After the initial construction of the canal finished in 1903, the Panamanian government at the time, under severe diplomatic pressure, signed a treaty giving control of the Panama Canal to the U.S. in perpetuity. The U.S. exercised complete control of the Panama Canal Zone until 1979, when President Jimmy Carter signed a treaty transferring control of the Canal to Panama.

At the time, the entire right-wing establishment condemned Carter's move and has condemned his decision to this day. Just 12 years later, the U.S. [invaded Panama](#) to reassert its influence. The U.S. military murdered thousands of people and left tens

of thousands homeless. However, its goals were achieved, and it has maintained a strong presence in Panama to this very day.



Greenland geology and selected mineral occurrences.

Greenland: rhetoric vs. reality

2019 was the first time Donald Trump raised a possible annexation or purchase of Greenland. However, this was not the first time the U.S. had discussed the possibility of acquiring Greenland from Denmark.

Greenland has long been a target of interest for the U.S. imperialists. The U.S. government has attempted to acquire Greenland four times: in 1867, 1910, 1946, and 2019. Although the imperialists' reasons for desiring Greenland have changed since its first proposal in 1867, they have always revolved around capitalist economic interests and control of the Western Hemisphere.

It is important to note that Trump's rants about Greenland should not be viewed as a violation of Denmark's sovereignty but as a violation of the already colonized people of Greenland. The vast majority of Greenland's population are Inuit, not Danish. Denmark violated the Inuit peoples' right to self-determination when it seized Greenland. The United States' desire to control Greenland is about its own interests, not a conflict with Denmark, which is considered the most pro-U.S. member of the European Union.

In the mid-19th century, the U.S. feared an attack from a stronger European country; thus, it sought Greenland as a potential strategic point of naval defense. In 1910, Greenland was a pawn in the United States' attempt to take control of the lucrative "Danish West Indies." Eventually, the U.S. was successful and purchased what is now called the "U.S. Virgin Islands" in 1917.

Nonetheless, the U.S. never gave up on Greenland. In 1946, the U.S. military was behind another major push to purchase Greenland. This proposal came after five years of U.S. military rule in Greenland during World War II. The U.S. military invaded Greenland after Denmark fell to Nazi Germany in 1941, stating that it aimed to protect Greenland from German aggression. In reality, the U.S. reason for invading in 1941 was the same as its reason for the purchase proposal in 1946: to establish a strong U.S.-led NATO jump-off point for an attack against the Soviet Union.

Even though the U.S. never formally acquired Greenland, it has maintained a significant military presence there since 1951. So, why is Trump focused on

Greenland now? Well, some of the reasons are the same as they always have been. Greenland serves as a strategic military point against Russia for naval and air forces. However, the ruling class' interest in Greenland goes far beyond military dominance. Greenland has two massive deposits of [rare earth elements](#) that are used to enhance various types of [electronics](#), ranging from military equipment to domestic telecommunications.

For decades, the U.S. has depended on China to import rare earth elements. Considering the escalating trade war against China, this is no longer acceptable. Trump wants to ensure access to Greenland's minerals and deny Chinese investment in those same minerals. The complete annexation of Greenland would undoubtedly achieve that end to some extent. However, Trump doesn't need to invade or purchase Greenland to achieve this.

It is far more likely that Trump is using this rhetoric to leverage a deal with Denmark that ensures the U.S. mining industry's access to Greenland's rare earth minerals and that China will be cut out completely. Nonetheless, the result is the same: the U.S. imperialists tightening their already strong grip on the Western hemisphere economically and strategically.

