

In Scandinavia, the Elites Freak Out about Trump's Designs on Greenland. Or pretend to.

By Bruce Bawer

This is about Scandinavia, but let's start with the Anglosphere. The other day, on his Talk TV show *Piers Morgan Uncensored*, the eponymous host discussed various topics with a panel whose most garrulous member was Kara Swisher, a stunningly obnoxious lesbian columnist – yes, even more obnoxious than Piers himself – whom I've never seen or read before but who obviously thinks that she's brilliant and that everyone else is an idiot.



The subject of Trump wanting to acquire Greenland came up. It turned out that neither the slimy Piers nor the odious Kara had been aware until Trump began talking about Greenland recently (or, actually, resumed talking

about it after having done so briefly during his first term) that the island is owned by Denmark. Nonetheless both of them had strong opinions about the issue. For Kara, Trump's refusal to rule out the use of military force to annex Greenland was one more reason to call him a fool. But hey, at least Trump knew that Greenland is owned by Denmark.

For the rest of Piers's panelists, as for many other stateside talking heads, the Greenland issue was mainly a cause for mirth. But let's move on to Scandinavia, where, for the most part, it was anything but.

“Just think of it for an instant,” [wrote](#) Maja Sojtaric in Norway’s *Nettavisen*: “an upcoming president of the world’s largest military power is willing to use his superior force to take over the territory of one of his allies.” Yes, commented Sojtaric, Trump is “easy to mock,” but “his wish to take territory from one of his allies is not a joke.” On the contrary, she warned, it’s “unbelievably dangerous. It destabilizes NATO. It ought to worry us here in Norway. A destabilization of NATO makes us extremely vulnerable.”

Sigh. Here we go again. During his first term, Trump threatened not to defend America’s NATO allies unless they paid their fair share. What happened as a result? They paid their fair share. NATO got stronger – which, of course, had been his goal all along. This is called negotiating. It’s called using your power to put pressure on people to achieve a desired result. Anybody with half a brain could see from the start what Trump was up to. But in Scandinavia, the same people who were wringing their hands over Trump’s NATO squeeze a few years ago are now frantic about the possibility of his invading Greenland. Reading their complaints, you wonder whether they’re ranting like this because they really believe what they’re saying, or whether they’re just doing what they think good journalists these days are supposed to do – namely, wax hysterical about the evil orange man.

Or maybe this kind of over-the-top pearl-clutching turns them on? In the case of Sojtaric, it seemed possible that this, in fact, was the case. If Trump wants to take Greenland from Denmark, she asked breathlessly, what was to keep him from taking – say – the Arctic island of Jan Mayen from Norway? Or, heaven forbid, the island of Svalbard? Or even – gasp! – the northern part of Norway itself, with its wealth of natural resources? (Oil! Gas! Fish!) It sounds almost as if she’s having some geopolitical version of a rape fantasy.

Or could it be that the reason why the Scandinavian academic, political, and media elites are getting worked up over Trump’s

sudden interest in Greenland is, quite simply, this: they're excited – positively titillated – by his attention to their own backyard. After all, if the icy wastes of Greenland are so much more important to the once and future American president than they are to the powers that be in Copenhagen, then perhaps their own little corner of the world matters more than they themselves ever realized. In other words, it may be that they're not offended or outraged by Trump's attention, but flattered by the boost to their sense of self-importance.

Another common Scandinavian response to Trump's Greenland remarks was the good old-fashioned equation of a Republican U.S. president with whoever happens to be the current world tyrant. During the early years of the Iraq War, the Scandinavian media made fetish out of equating George W. Bush with Saddam Hussein. So it is that in the Danish newspaper *BT*, Jeppe Elkjær Andersen [wrote](#) the other day that Trump's refusal to rule out military action against Denmark was "manna from heaven" for Putin and Xi, and that what Trump has said about Greenland is not unlike what Putin said about Ukraine before invading it. Andersen managed to find a Western military leader – namely, a retired Australian general named Mick Ryan – who was stupid enough to say that Trump wasn't just giving aid and comfort to Putin and Xi; he was also helping Kim Jong-un. A Danish military analyst, Peter Viggo Jakobsen, agreed.

At *Bergens Tidende*, the major newspaper in Bergen, Norway, researcher Iver B. Neumann, formerly of the London School of Economics, also [contended](#) that Trump's comments on Greenland represented "a victory of Putin." For years, Neumann wrote, Putin has "tried to sow division between the U.S. and Europe...Now Trump is doing the Russians' job for them." But that's not all: Trump's refusal to rule out military force against Denmark could alienate European allies. "Trump doesn't have to pull the U.S. out of NATO to undermine NATO," warned Neumann. (Far from recognizing that Trump's pressure on

America's NATO allies during his first term made the alliance stronger, Neumann credited Jens Stoltenberg, who was then the Secretary-General of NATO, with "putting time and effort into keeping the alliance together" in the face of Trump's threats to withdraw American protection from Europe.) And to top it all off, insisted Neumann, this whole business is "extremely bad news for Norway." Why? Because Norway is a member of NATO but not of the EU. His advice? If the EU decides to strengthen its own distinct security efforts, Norway should join in.

To be sure, some Scandinavian media acknowledged that Trump's overtures to Greenland come at a time when many Greenlanders are sore at the Danes and aching for full sovereignty. At the website of NRK, the Norwegian state broadcaster, Vilde Haugen and Mathias Hamre [reported](#) that in Greenland, which has had self-rule since 1979 while remaining a Danish territory, prime minister Mute Egede spoke for many islanders when he called for independence in his New Year's speech. They quoted Anna Jensine Arntzen, a Norwegian woman who is studying Nordic colonialism in Greenland, commented that the 90% of Inuits on the island still lack equal rights in housing and employment (among other things) as compared to Danes. Hence, when Donald Trump Jr. visited the island recently, "he was received by inhabitants in MAGA caps" who know they'd likely profit bigly by Americans.

NRK's article, then, provided a dose of quiet reason on the topic. Other interesting angles were provided by the deputy news editor of Iceland's only daily newspaper, Skúli Halldórsson, who wrote an article recalling that the Icelandic poet Einar Benediktsson was one of many prominent Icelanders who in 1914 argued that Iceland had the right to annex Greenland. Later, in 1931, Norway staked its claim to the island, and even occupied part of it.

There's a good deal precedent, then, for Trump's interest in that icy northern rock. But most of the Scandinavian media, as noted, chose to respond to him by freaking out. For example,

Norway's newspaper of record, *Aftenposten*, ran an [editorial](#) entitled "Trump is playing a dangerous game with Greenland." Although Egede has declared flatly that the island is "not for sale," the *Aftenposten* editors declared that this "will hardly stop Trump, whose philosophy of life is that everything and everyone is for sale." The editors also likened Trump to Putin, saying that while other countries in the democratic West "have largely rejected imperialism after the collapse of the colonial era," Trump "clearly wants to return to a time when great powers conquer new territories, either with money or military force." And this, concluded the editorial, "should send chills down the spines of many, even in Greenland."

If there was anything good about *Aftenposten's* silly editorial, it was that it sparked a reply which proved that at least one person in Scandinavia got it. In a cogent op-ed, George Gooding of the *Subjekt* website [urged](#) *Aftenposten's* editors to cool their heels. "The U.S. has a military presence on Greenland," Gooding pointed out, and when Trump says he won't rule out military "pressure" in the matter of Greenland, he could well mean "pulling the U.S. out of Greenland or Denmark – not attacking Greenland or Denmark." But it was in Gooding's closing paragraph that he made the key point: "It will soon be ten years since Trump entered politics, and still the press doesn't seem to understand the most basic aspects of how Trump communicates." Indeed. But to be fair to Scandinavian journalists, there's no evidence whatsoever that most of them see it as their job to understand and report on the actual facts, at least where Donald J. Trump is concerned. In that regard, at least, they're worthy cousins of their mainstream-media counterparts in the U.S.

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