

# The art of imperialistic absurdity

## Trump's Greenland and Panama Canal ambition



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If Hollywood ever decided to produce a sequel to *Dr. Strangelove* or *Veep*, Donald Trump's latest ambitions might just provide the perfect script. Picture this: a man with a penchant for gold-plated toilets and reality TV now wants to claim ownership of both Greenland and the Panama Canal. And why not? After all, who's going to stop him? Denmark? Panama? NATO? As Trump might say, "Sad."

Back in 2019, Trump floated the idea of purchasing Greenland, sparking laughter across the globe due to its sheer audacity and lack of precedent. The proposal seemed to stem from a mix of strategic ambitions and a transactional worldview, where even a massive, semi-autonomous territory could be treated like a commodity for sale. To many, the idea highlighted a misunderstanding of modern geopolitics and Denmark's strong ties to Greenland, which made the suggestion not only impractical but also surreal. It seemed like the punchline to a joke that no one had told. But fast forward to today, and the President-elect has taken it up a notch, suggesting he might use economic or even military force to seize the world's largest "ice cube." Think *Frozen*, but instead of Elsa singing "Let It Go," Trump is yelling, "Make Greenland American Again!"

Why Greenland, you ask? Well, beyond the glaciers and polar bears, it's about "unlimited" untapped resources—something Trump likely equates to a hidden treasure chest in a pirate movie. Imagine him, tricorn

hat and all, shouting, "X marks the spot!"

But there's a hitch: Greenland isn't for sale. Denmark's prime minister called the idea "absurd." Trump, of course, took this as a personal insult and cancelled a state visit to Denmark in August 2019—because nothing screams diplomacy like a tantrum. It's as if Tony Stark showed up to Wakanda demanding Vibranium, only to storm off when Shuri politely declined.

Trump's argument, though, has its own twisted logic: Denmark isn't doing enough to protect Greenland from Russia and China, as evidenced by its limited investment in Greenland's defence infrastructure and its reliance on NATO for strategic support. For instance, Denmark has been criticised for not allocating sufficient resources to counter growing Russian military activity in the Arctic or China's increasing economic influence through infrastructure projects. These gaps have left Greenland vulnerable, fuelling arguments for stronger international intervention. Trump's solution? American bases, troops, and perhaps a McDonald's on every fjord. Greenlanders, however, aren't buying it. Their prime minister has made it clear that while independence is a goal, it will not involve hosting a Trump Tower.

While Trump dreams of a frosty new state, he's also eyeing the Panama Canal. In his mind, America's "extraordinary generosity" in handing it over in 1999 was a grave

mistake. Never mind the century of exploitation, labour deaths, and military invasions that marked US control of the canal. For Trump, history isn't written in blood but in toll receipts.

His rhetoric about "extremely high" tolls charged by Panama sounds like a bad Yelp review. You can almost hear him: "The canal's service

out of a *Mission Impossible* movie—complete with shadowy Chinese agents, underwater submarines, and probably Tom Cruise dangling from the canal's locks. Except in this version, the mission is less "impossible" and more "implausible."

If Denmark and Panama won't comply, Trump has a Plan B: economic strong-arming. Think *The*

consumers who depend on these essential products. Such a move might also provoke retaliation from Denmark, further complicating trade relations. Meanwhile, Panama might find itself targeted with broader trade restrictions, which Trump could justify using the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977. Never mind that these moves

Trump, it's just Tuesday—a day for geopolitical gambits with real-world consequences. Such actions, if ever pursued, could destabilise international relations and provoke serious economic and diplomatic fallout, making the implications far from amusing for those involved.

The parallels between Trump's Greenland and Panama fantasies are almost Shakespearean—if Shakespeare wrote *Monty Python* sketches. Both involve a misunderstanding of sovereignty, a disdain for diplomacy, and an unwavering belief in America's divine right to do whatever it pleases.

In Greenland, Trump's approach echoes *The Avengers* when Loki declares, "You were made to be ruled." But unlike the heroes of Marvel Comic Universe, Greenland's leaders aren't buying it. Meanwhile, in Panama, Trump's rhetoric feels more like a scene from *The Simpsons*, where Homer, after being kicked out of Moe's Tavern, tries to buy the bar just to spite everyone.

Ultimately, Trump's Greenland and Panama fantasies reveal more about his worldview than about the territories themselves. For him, the world is a Monopoly board, and he's determined to own Boardwalk and Park Place—even if it means bankrupting everyone else.

But reality doesn't work that way. Greenland isn't a pawn in a game of Risk, and the Panama Canal isn't a property on The Game of Life. Both places are symbols of sovereignty, history, and resilience, which is unlikely to change, though Trump's bluster might make for great headlines.

So let's all take a moment to appreciate the absurdity of it all. Because in a world where a former reality TV star can threaten to buy an island and reclaim a canal, sometimes all you can do is laugh—and maybe start stockpiling insulin.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

Godfather, but instead of Marlon Brando, it's Trump muttering, "I'm gonna make them an offer they can't refuse—tariffs."

Denmark, for instance, could face increased US tariffs on goods like insulin and hearing aids—products that Americans rely on but Trump sees as leverage. These tariffs could potentially disrupt Denmark's significant export economy and increase healthcare costs for US

would hurt American consumers as much as anyone else—economic strategy isn't exactly Trump's forte. Just ask Atlantic City.

And then there's the "nuclear option": military force. Experts have dismissed this as unlikely, but can we really rule out anything? The man once suggested nuking Denmark's significant export economy and increase healthcare costs for US

# Kessler Syndrome: Space debris may create a future with no internet, TV, or mobile phone



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In 1923, British physician Havelock Ellis famously wrote in *The Dance of Life*, "The sun, the moon and the stars would have disappeared long ago had they happened to be within the reach of the predatory human hands." He missed the Red Planet—Mars.

We have already destroyed Earth, the only inhabitable planet in the solar system, beyond repair. Today, we breathe polluted air, drink contaminated water and grow food on chemically modified soil. We are using our lungs as a receptacle for hundreds of noxious pollutants. As a result, our planet has transitioned from the Holocene Epoch to a new geological epoch known as the Anthropocene Epoch.

In the last 65 years, we succeeded in bringing the Moon and Mars within our reach. We polluted both these heavenly orbs, which not a single human inhabits, though not to the extent we damaged Earth. Since the first human-made object reached the Moon on September 13, 1959, namely the Soviet Luna 2 lander, we have dumped upward of 200,000 kilogrammes of refuse, such as moon buggies that were abandoned during the manned Apollo missions, scores of unmanned probes that have crashed or landed on the Moon, backpacks and personal hygiene kits of astronauts, and many more on the lunar surface.

Mars may be 140 million miles away, but it is also not immune from man-made trash. There are already well-nigh 7,000 kilogrammes of trash—broken and crashed spacecraft, parachutes, foams, discarded hardware and rover tracks—on the Martian surface, from 50 years of robotic exploration. Scientists don't know how cosmic radiation, ice action and dust storms—the conditions of another world—will affect these

objects over time.

We almost made it to the Sun, 93 million miles away from Earth, by whizzing through its fiery atmosphere just 3.8 million miles above its surface. Thank heavens, other stars are still beyond our reach because they are light years away, but outer space in the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) is not.

The LEO, typically 160–2,000 kilometres above the Earth's surface, has long been a vital area for human activity in space, hosting satellites for communications, Earth observation, navigation and scientific research. The International Space Station (ISS) is among the most renowned entities in LEO, circling the Earth at an average altitude of 400 kilometres from the surface.

The predatory human hands converted the LEO into a junkyard, a dumping ground for space debris left over from six decades of space exploration. There are millions of pieces of space junk flying around in LEO. The majority of space

debris consists of man-made items, including fragments of spacecraft, small paint particles from these vehicles, components of rockets, defunct satellites and remnants from explosions of objects that are orbiting at high velocities, potentially reaching speeds of up to 28,000 kilometres per hour.

The scenario in which space

debris collides and creates more debris is called Kessler Syndrome, named after the NASA scientist Donald Kessler, who alerted us to this problem in 1978. More specifically, Kessler describes a situation in which if the density of space debris reaches a critical threshold, it will lead to a chain reaction of collisions in LEO that could envelop the planet in a debris field. This cascading phenomenon of space debris poses a significant risk of making LEO too clogged for satellites to orbit safely, or for launching future space missions.

As the number of satellites in orbit increases—about 110 new launches each year and at least 10 satellites or other objects a year breaking up into smaller fragments—the risk of severe collisions with space debris will escalate. The resulting consequences for all satellites and assets in space operating within a congested orbit, as well as for any spacecraft traversing these regions, will be disastrous. For example, the ISS has executed multiple evasive

manoeuvres to steer clear of debris. In one recent incident, a piece of debris came within four kilometres of the ISS. Furthermore, these errant objects also endanger the safety of astronauts.

If, indeed, satellites collide or go offline because of overcrowded LEO, critical services like internet, navigation (GPS), weather forecasts, cell phones, television and other space-based technologies could fail. Needless to say, this will cause widespread disruption to modern life. Imagine life without social media!

According to the European Space Agency, there are more than 13 million kilogrammes of material in LEO. Some 35,000 objects are being monitored by space surveillance networks. Approximately 9,000 of these objects are operational payloads, while the remaining 26,000 consist of debris that exceeds 10 centimetres in size. However, the actual number of objects in space

debris larger than one cm in size—large enough to be capable of causing catastrophic damage—is over one million.

An increasing number of these objects—an average of one piece per day—are falling back to Earth, failing to disintegrate upon re-entry as anticipated. A notable incident occurred in 1969 when five sailors on a Japanese vessel sustained injuries attributable to space debris from what was believed to be a Soviet spacecraft that struck the deck of their boat. More recently, in December 2024, a luminous metallic ring, exceeding eight feet in diameter and weighing over 500 kilogrammes, fell from the sky and crash-landed in a secluded village in Kenya. Luckily, no one was injured.

Space-faring nations that rely heavily on satellites are by far the major contributors to space debris. Despite the growing likelihood of satellite loss, they have not taken

decisive action to address the issue of junk in the LEO. Besides, they have no incentive to reduce debris generation except to protect their own spacecraft, which they do with shields.

It is important to note that space debris is not the responsibility of a single nation; rather, it is a shared obligation among all countries engaged in space exploration. Hence, it is imperative that for the common good of both humanity and the environment in the LEO, we should tackle Kessler Syndrome head-on.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of initiatives aimed at reducing the accumulation of space debris, the clutter persists in increasing. The situation has escalated to the point where we are staring at "an unsustainable environment in the long term." Historical precedents indicate that all is not lost; we have previously come together in the face of considerable challenges.



The scenario in which space debris collides and creates more debris is called Kessler Syndrome.

FILE PHOTO: EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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e Tender is invited in the National e-GP portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of goods mentioned below:

e Tender ID	Description of Items	Last Selling Date and Time	Opening Date and Time
1060745	Procurement of Cleaning Item	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 11:00
1060945	Procurement of Printer and Photocopier Tonner	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 11:30
1060950	Procurement of Printing and Binding Items	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 12:30
1060971	Procurement of Stationary and Other Equipment	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 13:00
1060990	Procurement of ICT Equipment	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 13:30
1061013	Procurement of Computer Related Accessories	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 14:30
1061028	Procurement of Office Equipment	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 15:00
1061048	Procurement of Others Equipment	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 15:30
1065627	Procurement of Furniture	10 Feb 2025 10:30	10 Feb 2025 16:00
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