

Journal of Politics and International Studies

Vol. 12, No. 1, January–June 2026, pp.192–199

The United States and Europe Under President Trump: Strategic Frictions in Greenland, Tariffs, and NATO

Farhan Khalid 

Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Government Graduate Murray College Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

Corresponding: farhankhalid5669@gmail.com

Dr. Ambreen Aman 

Assistant Professor, Political Science Higher Education Department, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: drambreenaman@gmail.com

Sara Shehzadi Salahuddin 

Emerging Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Government Graduate Murray College Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: sarashehzadisalahuddin7@gmail.com

Abstract

The qualitative research reflects, the transatlantic alliance has been a crucial part of Western security, economic partnerships, and support for democratic values. How has the issue of Greenland's potential sale to the United States affected the relationship between the US and its European allies? The further research highlights the difficulties and complexities faced in Greenland and Arctic politics, as well as NATO and European defense, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, trade and technology disputes between the US and EU, climate and energy policies, and the shifting global landscape with the rise of China and Russia. Additionally, study examines the Trump's approach to foreign policy represents an overarching change in the United States' perception of Europe. Instead of viewing Europe as a collaborative ally for security matters, there is now a focus on viewing the relationship as a transactional and negotiable one. How have tariffs affected the relationship between the United States and its NATO allies? In addition, study indicates a potential clash between the US and Europe on a variety of issues, including NATO, Ukraine, Greenland, trade, technology, and climate. It could lead to tensions and conflicts in the future.

Key Words: President Trump, Greenland, NATO, Transatlantic Partnership, Implications.

Introduction

The situation in Greenland serves as a notable example. President Trump's public interest in acquiring Greenland for the US, along with his threats to impose tariffs on NATO allies participating in joint exercises, resulted in a strong backlash from Europe. It also led to discussions about closing or taking back US military bases in Europe, which is a rare occurrence. In addition, many specialists believe that utilizing diplomatic measures, congressional oversight, and European deterrence can prevent disaster and potentially enhance Arctic safety. It particular event highlights the various complex dangers that the transatlantic partnership must confront, including strategic, economic, and political risks. The study sheds light into the difficulties faced in various areas, including the geopolitics of Greenland and the Arctic, defense in NATO and Europe, the conflict in Ukraine, trade and technology disputes between the US and EU, climate and energy policies, and the shifting global alliances with China and Russia. According to Bergmann, these points of conflict are rooted in larger structural issues, including the weakening of bipartisan backing for Europe in the U.S., Europe's increasing susceptibility, and the current administration's self-serving, independent stance. The election of Donald J. Trump and the growing trend of "America First" nationalism have significantly changed the political landscape. (Bergman, 2025).

The Political Tensions of Greenland and the Arctic: A Point of Conflict

In January 2026, tensions between the United States and its NATO allies reached an all-time high. The Trump administration had expressed interest in acquiring Greenland as a U.S. territory and this caused a major rift between the two sides of the Atlantic. President Trump announced on social media that he would be imposing tariffs on eight NATO allies who were participating in joint military exercises in Greenland. These tariffs would increase gradually, starting at 10% and reaching 25% by June. The countries that were specifically targeted in this political move were Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, and Finland. (Sunwoo& Kim, 2026). The U.S. president, Donald Trump, claimed that Greenland was crucial for the "Golden Dome" missile defense system and warned that China and Russia were seeking to gain a strategic advantage if the U.S. did not take control. This caused a lot of controversy and backlash, as many people saw it as a power play and a disregard for the sovereignty of Greenland. In a recent meeting, Bernd Lange, the Chair of the European Parliament's trade committee, suggested that the EU should consider activating the EU Trade Defense Instrument (ACI) as a response to the ongoing trade tensions with the United States. It could potentially lead to restrictions on U.S. investments, services, procurement, and arms sales. There was also a discussion about the possibility of halting U.S. weapons purchases, which amounted to over \$76 billion in 2024. The decision will ultimately have a significant impact on the relationship between the EU and the U.S., and it is important to consider the potential consequences before taking any action. European policymakers were faced with a tough decision- whether or not to close or reclaim U.S. military bases. This decision had the potential to greatly impact America's ability to gather intelligence and carry out operations in Europe. Retired U.S. European Command Chief, Ben Hodges, expressed his concerns that losing these bases would severely weaken America's strategic position in not only Europe, but also the Middle East and Africa. The decision was not an easy one, as it had the

potential to greatly affect the relationship and cooperation between Europe and the United States. The current crisis in Greenland serves as a reminder of the challenges that NATO faces. (Schulz, 2026).

Alternatives for Balancing Diplomatic and Congressional Powers

Despite the current tensions surrounding Greenland, there is still hope for the transatlantic alliance. Ambassador Daniel Fried (2026) suggests that there are three potential solutions that could help ease the crisis and maintain unity within NATO. It is important to remember that behind all the politics and conflict, there are real people involved who are working towards finding a peaceful resolution. By focusing on cooperation and communication, we can work towards a positive outcome for all involved. When countries have conflicts, it's important for leaders to come together and find a way to work through their differences. That's why, after the meeting between the US, Denmark, and Greenland in Washington on January 14, 2026, officials decided to create a group where they could discuss and find a compromise that would satisfy everyone's needs. The planning also permit the Washington administration to acquire a political victory without the need for military escalation highlighting the power and resilience of transatlantic relationship even in tough diplomatic times. It is important to remember that there are people on both sides of this issue, and it is mandatory for people to find out the better solution of the core issue. (Al Jazeera, Jan 18, 2026).

NATO and European Defense: The Shift of Responsibilities and Pursuit of Strategic Independence

The Washington Administration has consistently state that need for European allies must increase their military spending budget. NATO's long-standing principle of collective security is increasingly being interpreted in more transactional terms, with U.S. security guarantees appearing to be linked to immediate strategic or economic returns. European military activities and exercises in the Arctic may encounter extra costs or limitations imposed by the US. While the establishment of NATO may initially reason few uncertainty, this could also prompt Europe to become more aggressive and active in military matters. With increasing military concerns, internal crisis, and pressure from countries like Russia, European nations may ramp up their own military investments. It could include strengthening air and missile defense, cybersecurity, and rapid response forces. It puts European countries in a difficult position as they must balance deterring Russia with maintaining a united front with the US, while also navigating potential arrangements for Arctic operations and dealing with economic pressure. The increasing pressures within the transatlantic alliance may lead to short-term conflicts, but they could also push Europe towards greater self-sufficiency and strategic planning. This may result in a shift in responsibility, governance, and operational independence within NATO over the next decade. How Europe cover this uncertain lsituation, balancing their commitment to the alliance with their pursuit of autonomy, will play a important role in determining NATO's power and influence in the post-Trump regime (Rose & Jack, 2026).

The Impact of Ukraine on European Security

The signals a growing desire for European countries to be treated as equal partners in security decisions rather than simply being passive recipients. The differences in priorities between the U.S. and its European allies highlight how domestic political

agendas and personal goals can unintentionally weaken NATO's effectiveness. Former U.S. ambassador to NATO, Daniel Fried, stresses the importance of managing internal disagreements within the alliance while also supporting Ukraine. Mishandling disputes such as the Greenland conflict or tariff threats could divert attention and resources away from deterring Russian aggression, ultimately giving Moscow an advantage. European leaders are keenly aware that a weakened or divided NATO would give Russia an advantage, especially in regions where there are disputes such as Eastern Ukraine, the Donbas, and the Black Sea. According to recent reports, several European countries in NATO are considering alternative defense strategies that are not reliant on the United States. Germany, Sweden, and France have announced plans to increase their military presence in the Baltic, North Sea, and Arctic regions, in order to deter any potential aggression from Russia. (Fried, 2026). It also serves as a signal of their preparedness to take independent action if the policies of the United States become destabilizing. These actions, which aim to strengthen European security, highlight the increasing need for Europe to play a bigger part in regional strategy. It is especially important as the United States faces challenges with domestic politics and a foreign policy focused on transactions, making traditional coordination with Europe more complicated. Overall, the conflict in Ukraine highlights the critical role of NATO and the vulnerability of the alliance when under the leadership of a transactional U.S. government. Europe remains a strong supporter of Kyiv, providing both military and economic aid. However, disagreements within the alliance, such as those with Greenland, emphasize the importance of maintaining diplomatic relationships, strategic independence, and trust among allies. If these tensions are not addressed, it could lead to weaknesses in deterrence and give opportunities for adversaries like Russia to take advantage. Therefore, effectively managing conflicts within the alliance is just as crucial to European security as directly addressing the military threat posed by Russia. (Lange, 2026).

Trade, Tariffs, and Economic Tensions

In January 2026, the Trump administration announced tariffs on Greenland as part of a series of economic confrontations with the EU. These tariffs initially imposed a 10% tax on eight NATO allies, with a threat to increase it to 25% later in the year. It's an addition to previous trade measures, such as levies of 10-15% on steel and aluminum that have been implemented in previous years. The Washington administration presented these measures as a means of gaining control over NATO allies by using economic pressure and territorial negotiations as leverage. In response, Europe has acted quickly and in unison. The European Union is considering utilizing the Trade Defense Instrument, which allows for limitations on U.S. services, investments, and procurement. It could potentially impact the purchase of U.S. defense equipment, which is estimated to be worth over \$76 billion in 2024. Further highlights the impact of trade issues, as they not only affect economic outcomes but also have the power to influence alliances and long-term stability between transatlantic nations. (BBC News, Jan 24, 2025).

The Impact of Technology on Global Governance in a Changing Climate

In recent years, the divide between Europe and the U.S. has widened beyond issues of security and trade and has extended into the areas of technology and climate

policy. Under the Trump administration, the two regions have taken divergent paths. (Anghel & Sapatafora, 2026). Europe has implemented initiatives such as the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and the Digital Services Act (DSA) to regulate and promote fair competition among U.S.-based technology companies and enforce data privacy, asserting its role as a regulatory powerhouse. While Europe has taken a proactive stance on climate change, the Trump administration has taken a hostile approach and withdrawn from commitments like the Paris Agreement. It has caused tension between Europe and the US, especially with measures like the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, which could impact US trade interests and create economic and diplomatic conflicts. The ongoing disagreement over Greenland highlights the interconnectedness of various policy areas. European leaders view the U.S.'s actions, such as imposing tariffs and asserting territorial ambitions, as indicative of a larger disregard for international norms and governing structures. This, in turn, strengthens Europe's desire to achieve strategic autonomy by developing independent technology standards, implementing their own climate policies, and building up their defense capabilities. The Arctic is a region of great importance, not only for security but also for climate monitoring and renewable energy infrastructure. European countries have invested in green technology initiatives in Greenland and the Nordic countries, showing their economic and strategic interests in the region. (The Economic Times, Jan 18, 2026).

China and Russia's Manipulation of Divisions in the Transatlantic Relationship

Former Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas stated, in January 2026, that Beijing and Moscow may be taking advantage of the visible rift between the US and its European allies. Adversaries are using territorial disputes, economic pressure, and trade conflicts to weaken NATO and achieve their strategic goals in important regions for global security. Russia, for example, is increasing its military presence in the Baltic, Black Sea, and Arctic areas, taking advantage of any hesitation or disunity among NATO members. At the same time, China is expanding its activities and investments in the Arctic region, taking advantage of the lack of coordinated resistance and potential distractions within the alliance. (CNBC, Jan 19, 2026). However, the strategic benefits that China and Russia have in the Arctic are not set in stone. The United States can strengthen Arctic deterrence by working closely with Denmark and other NATO allies. It will help ensure that Greenland's infrastructure, airspace, and defense capabilities continue to be a part of NATO's frameworks. By taking coordinated actions in diplomacy, military, and economy, we can limit the influence of our adversaries and show that despite differences, we can maintain a strategic balance. The recent Greenland crisis serves as a reminder of the fragility of the Arctic region and presents a chance for the United States and Europe to reevaluate their cooperative strategies. It could strengthen their alliances and prevent China and Russia from gaining any potential advantages in the region. (TRT World, Jan 16, 2026).

Possible Solutions for Resolving Conflicts

The recent crisis in Greenland has highlighted weaknesses in NATO and transatlantic relationships. However, it also provides an opportunity for potential solutions through cooperative diplomacy, oversight by lawmakers, and strengthening alliances. Protecting U.S. interests in the Arctic is crucial, and this can be achieved by maintaining strategic access through missile defense and intelligence operations. It is important to work with allies and show respect for their governance,

as well as minimize the negative impact of any unilateral statements made by the U.S. Another consideration is the possibility of Greenland seeking independence, in which case arrangements could be made for their inclusion in NATO or a Compact of Free Association, similar to agreements the U.S. has with Pacific Island nations.(CNN, Jan 19,2026). The establishment of regional defense obligations and integration of Greenlandic security into NATO's framework would ensure the island's strategic infrastructure supports stability in the transatlantic region. By finding a balance between self-determination and alliance security needs, this would also prevent any potential exploitation by adversaries like Russia and China. Additionally, European countries have increased their involvement in Arctic exercises. It allows the Trump administration to claim a significant accomplishment without using force or engaging in military conflicts. Countries such as Denmark, Germany, Sweden, and France have all increased their military presence and joint exercises in the Arctic. It's not only helps to deter potential threats, but also showcases the strength and unity of these allied nations in a disputed region. By resolving the conflict in Greenland, NATO has the opportunity to strengthen and enhance its capabilities in the Arctic region as well as establish better mechanisms for handling internal disputes. The situation highlights the importance of utilizing careful diplomacy, legislative measures, and collaborative military planning to maintain trust and deter potential conflicts within the transatlantic alliance. (Kempe, 2026).

Conclusion

The disagreement over Greenland highlights the various risks facing the alliance between Europe and the United States. Issues such as tariffs, territorial claims, and individual policies have revealed weaknesses in NATO, causing concerns about the United States' dependability and the strength of collective defense strategies. It has also emphasized the need for Europe to strive for greater strategic independence. Disputes surrounding land ownership, economic influence, and differing opinions on potential threats have caused increased tension among countries. This has shown that even long-standing alliances can be influenced by short-term pressures and domestic political motives. However, it is important to remember that these pressures do not necessarily lead to predetermined outcomes. By working together in a coordinated manner, utilizing checks and balances on individual executive decisions, and maintaining a strong presence in the Arctic, the alliance can fulfill its defense commitments, incorporate potential Greenlandic autonomy within NATO structures, and prevent potential conflicts. These actions would also hinder the ability of adversaries to exploit divisions within the alliance. Striking a balance between Europe's increased responsibility in its own defense and the US's continued role as a stabilizing force will greatly impact the strength of NATO and the transatlantic alliance in the years to come.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

Funding

The authors did not mention any funding for this research.

References

Max Bergmann, (2025). *The Transatlantic Alliance in the Age of Trump: The Coming Collisions*,”(report, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, February 14, 2025), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/transatlantic-alliance-age-trump-coming-collisions>.

U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1949*, Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/nato>.

WON Sunwoo and Kim Eun-joong, (2026). *80-Year Transatlantic Alliance Teeters as Greenland Dispute Sparks NATO Collapse*,”*The Chosun Daily* (English), January 19, 2026, <https://www.chosun.com/english/world-en/2026/01/19/FJDNVRDW2NCHVHA3KVOFXX3E2Q/>.

Christian Schulz, (2026). *Trump’s Greenland tariffs: A step too far?,”* Allianz Global Investors, January 19, 2026, <https://www.allianzgi.com/en/insights/outlook-and-commentary/trumps-greenland-tariffs>.

Trump announces new tariffs over Greenland — how have EU allies responded?,” Al Jazeera, January 18, 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/1/18/trump-announces-new-tariffs-over-greenland-how-have-eu-allies-responded>.

Tim Ross and Victor Jack, (2026). *Time to Dump Trump? Europeans Whisper Last-Resort Options to Save Greenland,”* Politico,

Daniel Fried, (2026). “The US and NATO Can Avoid Catastrophe over Greenland and Emerge Stronger. Here’s How,” *Atlantic Council*.

Jason Lange, (2026). “Just One in Five Americans Support Trump’s Efforts to Acquire Greenland, Reuters/Ipsos Poll Finds,” *Reuters*, January 14, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/just-one-five-americans-support-trumps-efforts-acquire-greenland-reutersipsos-2026-01-14/>.

Anthony Reuben, “Why Trump Is Targeting Spain over NATO Spending,” *BBC News*, June 24, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckg3082d3ero>.

Veronica Anghel and Giuseppe Spatafora, (2026). *Global Risks to the EU in 2026: What Are the Main Conflict Threats for Europe?,”* European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).

Germany weighs deploying Eurofighters, naval vessels to Greenland in NATO Arctic security push,” *TRT World*, January 16, 2026, <https://www.trtworld.com/article/150160cec84b>.

Auzinea Bacon, “Trump Has Tariffs. Europe Has a ‘Trade Bazooka.’ This Greenland Standoff Could Get Ugly, Fast,” *CNN*, updated January 19, 2026, <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/01/18/business/europe-greenland-trump-tariffs-trade>.

Holly Ellyatt, “Europe Weighs Using Trade ‘Bazooka’ against the U.S. as Greenland Crisis Deepens,” *CNBC*, published January 19, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/19/europe-retaliatory-tariffs-aci-greenland-trump-threat-us.html>.

Frederick Kempe, (2026). “*At Davos, Trump’s 19th-century instincts will collide with 21st-century uncertainty,*” Atlantic Council. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/inflection-points/at-davos-trumps-19th-century-instincts-will-collide-with-21st-century-uncertainty/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Reuters, “China, Russia Benefit from Trump’s Greenland Tariff Threat, Says EU,” *The Economic Times*, January 18, 2026, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/china-russia-benefit-from-trumps-greenland-tariff-threat-says-eu/articleshow/126635291.cms>