

WEBVTT

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<v SPEAKER_1>On this episode of Defence Deconstructed, which will record on January 23rd, 2026, I'm speaking to Kristian Kristensen, who's the head of the Royal Danish Defence Institute's Strategy and War Studies Program.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Talk to him about the historical evolution of Denmark's relationship with the United States from a military and strategic perspective, how that relationship has included Greenland historically, and all of that to situate recent events involving President Trump and territory in Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Enjoy that program.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Kristian, welcome to Defence Deconstructed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Thank you so much.

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<v SPEAKER_1>If you could just introduce yourself and your role before we get going.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, so my name is Kristian.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I direct the Institute for Strategy and War Studies at the Royal Danish Defence College.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Before that, I was director of the Centre for Military Studies at the University of Copenhagen.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I've spent the last 20 years doing research and thinking about Danish defence and security policy.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And for the last 10 years or so, I've increasingly been focusing that effort on matters related to Arctic security, Greenland and Denmark's role in that region especially.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Okay, so I think you're a great guest to help us

understand what has happened over the last couple of weeks regarding Greenland, US interests there, relations with the Kingdom of Denmark and the wider NATO alliance in the United States.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And I'm going to help you walk our listeners through all of that.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And maybe just start, could you give a bit of reflection of what has transpired in the last two weeks?

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<v SPEAKER_1>And how are Danes thinking about all of that?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, well that certainly has been a roller coaster ride here in Copenhagen for the last year, but especially for the last two or three weeks.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I think it came as a surprise for a lot of Danes that President Trump sort of relaunched his ideas about taking over control of Greenland a year ago.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then it sort of went away, and now it came back with a vengeance on the agenda, and especially being tied in to the US intervention in Venezuela and President Trump not ruling out the use of military force has shaken a lot of Danes.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It has shaken the foundations of Danish defence and security policy basically from when Denmark decided to join NATO as a founding member in 1949.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And there is a widespread consensus that this is the most serious foreign policy, and we can decide what we want to call it, crisis, conflict that Denmark has been in, basically since World War II.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So a real sense of crisis here, that at least as we speak today has leveled a little bit, all right?

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<v SPEAKER_2>It seems like we're in a bit of a more smooth sailing today after President Trump's announcement in Davos in Switzerland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I can't remember whether it was yesterday or the day before yesterday.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Things are getting a little bit messed up in terms of the calendar.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But to sum up, really a sense of crisis.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Denmark has seen itself as a key US ally, and it has been the sort of first principle of Danish foreign security policy is to try to align itself as closely with the US, both in a strategic sense, but also in a moral or emotional sense.

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<v SPEAKER_2>This feels like a very rough and dangerous breakup.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Okay, so I think that's a great way to frame the rest of the conversation.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I guess we go back and kind of start historically.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I don't know if it's with the founding of NATO or earlier, but how has the kingdom thought about its security relationship and the need to engage or be allied with the United States and the wider transatlantic community?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Maybe start from there and kind of bring us to the future about how the last couple of weeks have sat in a wider span of Danish strategic thinking.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Well, I think going back again to 49, just very quickly, Denmark tried an overall security strategy of neutrality, worked nicely in World War I, didn't work in World War II because Denmark was occupied by Nazi Germany and the US established a military presence in Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then after World War II, Denmark opts for the opposite of neutrality, namely alliance, and tries to manage that alliance relationship being a frontline state in the Cold War, sort of being a diligent member of NATO, but still being a little bit reluctant about

being too forceful against the Soviet Union, of course, being very mindful of Denmark's strategic position as a frontline state.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that then changes after the end of the Cold War, where it is even more easy for Danish politicians to sort of buy in to the US-led New World Order, right?

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<v SPEAKER_2>That we are all moving towards a new period in time with globalization and the use of armed forces actually for peacekeeping.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So Denmark becomes an even more loyal US ally and follows the US out in the world and tries to punch above its weight, be a more valued ally than other allies, of course, both because I think many Danish politicians believed in the US-led project or working for a rule-based international order, whatever you want to call it, but of course also for more strategic purposes in the sense that it would buy access and maybe even influence in Washington.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think to a large extent Denmark, the strategy of Denmark is comparable to the United Kingdom, also in the Netherlands, and probably also to a large extent Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So this probably is not that difficult from your traditional position.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that has meant substantial investment, not in terms of money, but in terms of political capital and life spent of Danish soldiers in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and also before that bearing a part of the burden in the Balkans.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then Russia starts to becoming a problem again in 2014, which leads to a gradual realisation in Denmark that perhaps the world is not moving towards eternal peace, but war and security issues may actually appear closer to Danish territory than we were used to.

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<v SPEAKER_2>This also leads to a both reconsideration and re-evaluation of what it actually means that Denmark is not just Denmark proper, a very small European state, but actually is what is called the Kingdom of Denmark, consisting of three political entities, Denmark proper, the Far East Island and most especially Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Because as the security situation with Russia deteriorates, and as climate change is slowly opening up the Arctic region, the geostrategic importance of especially Greenland also increases, meaning that slowly from actually already from 2008, but increasingly after 2014 with Russia's annexation of Korea, and especially towards the end before the full scale invasion in 22, Greenland sort of becomes also more important in the Danish-U.S.

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<v SPEAKER_2>relationship.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It was that during the Cold War, Denmark is what is in sort of NATO history called one of the stepping stone countries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the reason Denmark was allowed to join NATO was because Denmark had territory that worked as a stepping stone getting reinforcements from North America to the European theater, of course being Greenland and the Far East Islands.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Same is true with Norway and Portugal.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Norway because of the Norwegian coastline and Portugal because of the ashore islands.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So of course Greenland was important during the Cold War, especially from the strategic perspective and the defence of the North Atlantic, also the North American continent.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And when Russia and the US, when their rivalry intensifies, that also increases the strategic importance of Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that has been important and sort of an important part of US-Danish relations because it actually means that the relation is not one of total dependence, i.e.

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<v SPEAKER_2>that Denmark is totally dependent on US because of the US security guarantee in NATO.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And in the end, also the US extended the terms.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But actually, that the US is also, to a slight degree, also dependent on Denmark because Denmark controls the strategic territory of Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that has led to a working relationship where Denmark and the United States, increasingly also with the participation of the Greenlanders, but we can come back to that, have had a division of labour in relation to Greenlandic security where the US has taken responsibility for the high-end military defence and high-end military tasks, and then Denmark has taken care of the more low-end, sort of Coast Guard social security issues in Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it has basically been a relationship that for 75 years has worked relatively good for both parties, and that then fundamentally changes with Donald Trump's idea about buying or annexing the territory of Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so here we are today, making it not just a bilateral or trilateral issue between the US, Copenhagen and Nuuk, the capital in Greenland, but making it a key issue of concern in the wider transatlantic security relationship.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's very strange to sit here in Copenhagen and be the center of attention in a meeting in Davos, where first and foremost, you usually discuss economic issues or discuss sort of issues of geoeconomics or geopolitical issues that has got something to do with areas far away from the kingdom of Denmark.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And now all of a sudden, Donald Trump has made the kingdom of Denmark the center of attention.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Could you maybe just flesh out in a little bit more detail, how has Copenhagen managed the relationship when it comes to Greenland, how much of the relationship is it Greenland is a strategic location, place of geography, important to the transatlantic relationship, but also to the United States.

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<v SPEAKER_1>How have Danes managed the relationship either bilaterally with the United States?

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<v SPEAKER_1>I guess, sorry, I guess to your point, increasingly have

been moved to a trilateral discussion with Greenlanders as well.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Or how much of that has occurred within a wider NATO focus?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Has it been a direct engagement with Washington or in the wider transatlantic conversation involving Brussels over time?

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<v SPEAKER_2>That's a good question.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We've seen a change there recently, but traditionally and I would say until two or three years ago.

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<v SPEAKER_2>This has been primarily a bilateral, either bilateral kingdom of Denmark or bilateral Denmark-Greenland-United States affair.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The Greenland basically plays two roles in the wider transatlantic security, in wider transatlantic security.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The first is as a part of the North Atlantic and maintaining and securing sea lines of communication across the Atlantic and establishing control both of the airspace and the sea.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So that's sort of the southern, if you can say that, the southern or North Atlantic part of Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then there's the arctic part of Greenland, where Greenland sits squarely between Russia and the United States, of course, with Canada closer to it than the United States.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And if you go on a transatlantic flight from, let's say Copenhagen to Chicago, you will fly over Greenland, the Greenlandic ice sheet, and then across Canadian territory before you get to the United States.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The same is true if you're not a passenger flight, but an intercontinental ballistic missile, you will fly the same trajectory.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It is the shortest route, which means that the Greenland is an important territory for the strategic defence of the United States.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that has been the backbone of the relationship.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that is, of course, about the territory of the United States, more than is about the defence of Europe, meaning that this, from Washington's perspective, is an American prerogative to handle, right, just the same as NORAD.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's not that much a part of NATO, right?

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's a Canadian-U.S.

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<v SPEAKER_2>bilateral affair.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Same goes with Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And the US have had military presence in Greenland since World War II.

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<v SPEAKER_2>During the Cold War, it was substantial, more than 10,000 US troops stationed there at the peak.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then that presence gradually was reduced to what it is today.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The only remaining US presence is what was used to be a two-layer base.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Now it's called Petrofix Space Base, which is an early warning missile radar at the far far northwestern part of Greenland.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it has the function, it says in the name, of providing early warning of a Russian or Chinese missile launch with the trajectory across the North Pole.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So traditionally, the relationship used to be a Danish-U.S.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Of course, as I said, Denmark is actually a kingdom with three constituent parts.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And already during the Cold War, but especially within the last 10 or 15 years, Greenlanders and Greenlandic politicians have worked hard to make a claim to be involved more, both in domestic politics in Greenland, which they have a large say in as a wide-ranging home rule in Greenland, but also in foreign security affairs.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And this is where it becomes a little bit complicated, because the Danish Constitution says that foreign defence and security policy is a prerogative of Copenhagen.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But on the other hand, a pragmatic way of doing things has developed, where the Greenlanders are increasingly consulted, but also integrated in decision making.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, the bilateral relationship is now a trilateral relationship that you can also hear expressed in many of the statements made by the both Danish Prime Minister, but also Greenlandic politicians, making very clear that this is not something that Copenhagen can decide.

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<v SPEAKER_2>This is something where Nuuk, the capital of Greenland, also has a say.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Sorry, now getting back to your question about what your question was actually about, which was about NATO.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So this used to be a bilateral thing, and Denmark was not as such super interested in giving NATO a more substantial role in the Arctic.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think from two points, one was that it's really nice to have this bilateral relationship with the US and didn't want to share it with Brussels.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think you can at some points at least find the same argument in the Canadian debate.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Sounds a little familiar, yeah, exactly.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then no need to provoke Russia, unneeded, and having a larger NATO presence might also meet some opposition in Greenland, because it would be seen also in Greenland as a militarization of the Arctic.

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<v SPEAKER_2>After Russian invasion of Ukraine in 22, that logic changes, and Denmark goes sort of full ahead on deterring Russia wherever that needs to be.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that is also a reflection of that the domestic politics in Greenland change.

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<v SPEAKER_2>They also, consensus in Greenland is okay.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The Arctic is not a zone of peace anymore.

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<v SPEAKER_2>This is actually potentially a theater in conflict theater with Russia.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We need to take our part, making it easier also for Denmark to integrate NATO more.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So in that sense, what we are seeing now with the sort of very, very, very loose and not very clear framework for perhaps finding some solution to the US claims that a bigger NATO role could be a solution is, I would say, something that fits nicely within Danish thinking for the last two or three years on how to manage the Arctic region.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Before getting into that, I think just one other thing I'd like you to flesh out is the historical arrangement.

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<v SPEAKER_1>In my understanding, there's actually a legal agreement between the United States and Denmark that has set the rules for American presence in Greenland specifically.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Could you just walk through what that entails and maybe connect that to, as you outlined, the trajectory of over the course of the Cold War, there's a drawdown of what was at one point historically, a quite significant American presence in Greenland, which then became quite small.

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<v SPEAKER_1>How was that managed and was that reduction in American presence?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Was that an American choice?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Was that at the suggestion of Copenhagen?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Or how did the relationship governing how the US could be involved there?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Did that have any impact at all about how involved the Americans became in Greenland over time?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, great question.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'll try to do it short.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the basic document regulating US presence in Greenland is a bilateral defence agreement from 1951.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That is a continuation of a wartime agreement.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And the 1951 agreement anchors the US presence within the larger NATO framework.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It basically states that, as is evident for everybody, that Denmark can't defend Greenland alone.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It is a shared responsibility between Denmark and the United States.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And in order for the United States to be able to bear their part of the burden of defending Greenland, they get wide-ranging rights to both establish military bases, do what they deem necessary on those bases, and also gives the US wide-ranging rights to conduct military operations, exercises, and move in Greenlandic territory, whether on land, air, or sea.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So basically, the US of course, Denmark has to, Denmark and then later both Denmark and Greenland, of course, have to sort of agree to that you still want to have this agreement, but it's unending, right?

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<v SPEAKER_2>So it's agreement that will exist forever unless somebody wants to opt out of it.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The only sort of limitations is that there is a Danish liaison officer on the US basis, and he or she can go around, but it's US jurisdiction.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And Denmark as such has very little say of what the US would do on those base areas.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Of course, a working relationship develops because the US also have an interest in not pissing Denmark off more than necessary.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then in the beginning, there are both US naval bases, airfields, and then as the Cold War develops, the US establish early warning radars, but actually also as part of the, what is called the distant early warning line that I think also as part of Canada, it actually traversed the Greenlandic ice sheet.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the US manned radar sites across the Greenlandic ice sheet.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And if some of your listeners look up a map, they can see that that's pretty substantial investment and also logistically very complicated to have manned radar stations across the Greenlandic ice

sheet.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Very substantial investment also in terms of research and development.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The US.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Army experimented with drilling in the Greenlandic ice sheet, with trying to figure out whether it was suitable for ICBM launch sites.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Quickly, they found out that the ice sheet moves, so it's not a very suitable place for hiding your ICBMs, but a very, very large presence.

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<v SPEAKER_2>When the military technological developments during the Cold War makes bombers fly longer and makes ICBMs more important, the need for having a substantial US presence in Greenland is also reduced.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So towards the end of the Cold War, we see a reduction of US personnel that are driven primarily by US strategic priorities.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then, as the Cold War ends, the only thing that the US is really interested in is to maintain the early warning radar site, which means that all the other US base areas are disbanded or given, turned over to Denmark, and which means, and then only the P2Fix base space is left.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That is how things are until 2004, where the United States want to make some modernizations, P2Fix base space to enable the radar to be part of the US missile defence that George W.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Bush was investing in at that time.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Denmark and Greenland agrees, but importantly, a new agreement is made, adding to the 1951 agreement, saying that Greenland is now also part to the complex of agreement, meaning that if new stuff needs to be done, then Greenland needs to be integrated in the decision-making process.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But the US has not been interested in Greenland, apart from the missile defence upgrade since the end of the Cold War.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then the Arctic comes back on the strategic agenda, as the relationship with Russia deteriorates, both beginning under Obama, but especially under the first Trump administration, the Pentagon sort of opened its eyes on the Arctic region again.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And there is a process in the Pentagon figuring out how to increase its presence and force posture in the Arctic region.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And a lot of US personnel sort of visit Greenland to figure out whether it would make sense to do a naval station, some kind of joint base with Denmark or what would actually be needed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think the conclusion is that at the moment, at least it's not needed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The Keflavik airfield in Iceland and existing US bases, Pjotovic space base and bases along the Norwegian coast are sufficient for the US at the moment.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that has basically been the situation, I think, from a Pentagon perspective, that of course the interest has increased, and I know that there are more exercises within the Arctic Territory, including in Greenland, for instance, reinforcements exercises of the Pjotovic space base together with Canada, but no need for more bases.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the driving factor is US strategic interest.

00:29:59.520 --> 00:30:17.520

<v SPEAKER_2>And especially after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, I would have very difficulty seeing any Danish decision-maker saying no to increased US presence in Greenland.

00:30:17.580 --> 00:30:30.060

<v SPEAKER_2>Last year, the Danish parliament, and this is even after Donald Trump stated that he wanted to acquire Greenland the first time around during this presidency.

00:30:30.060 --> 00:30:49.760

<v SPEAKER_2>After that, the Danish parliament, with a large majority, accepted establishment of US military bases in Denmark proper, and that has been a very clear red line, but Denmark threw out the Cold War.

00:30:49.760 --> 00:30:56.100

<v SPEAKER_2>And that just underlines how the Danish threat perception has changed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

00:30:57.140 --> 00:31:06.760

<v SPEAKER_2>So I cannot imagine a Danish politician, in office at least, that would say no to a legit American request for having a more military presence in Greenland.

00:31:06.760 --> 00:31:28.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Which is also why it's very difficult for the Danish public and also Danish decision-makers to understand why Donald Trump needs access to Greenland from international security purposes, because it's just to pick up the phone and call Luke and Copenhagen and say what he wants, he will probably get it.

00:31:29.840 --> 00:31:33.260

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00:31:33.260 --> 00:31:35.780

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00:31:35.780 --> 00:31:45.180

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00:31:45.180 --> 00:31:49.580

<v SPEAKER_1>Just before getting to that piece, would there be any consideration?

00:31:49.580 --> 00:32:03.240

<v SPEAKER_1>So I think looking around the globe, existing US historical basing patterns, in some places, in Asia for instance, there have been changing attitudes amongst local population to hosting US forces.

00:32:03.240 --> 00:32:13.400

<v SPEAKER_1>And I know that you had touched on this a little bit about evolving politics in the kingdom with territories in Greenland and Faroe Islands.

00:32:13.400 --> 00:32:37.860

<v SPEAKER_1>From your lens, would there have been any reason for the US to be concerned that politics in the kingdom might make more

complicated getting access to additional American presence in a way that would be more unlikely to have been conducive to whatever changing American strategic interest would be?

00:32:37.860 --> 00:32:40.540

<v SPEAKER_1>I'm sorry that my grammar is a little convoluted here.

00:32:40.540 --> 00:32:41.400

<v SPEAKER_1>It's early in the morning.

00:32:41.400 --> 00:32:53.160

<v SPEAKER_1>But was there any reason to think that from your lens that an American would have looked at the situation and said, well, the politics are becoming more complicated, and we couldn't just approach this the way that we had since 1951?

00:32:54.720 --> 00:33:09.220

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, and I think you're right that the politics are becoming more complicated because there is this complete relationship between NUKE and Copenhagen that also waxes and wanes between good cooperation and not very good cooperation.

00:33:09.220 --> 00:33:24.680

<v SPEAKER_2>It is a post-colonial relationship, and there is constant negotiation between Denmark and Greenland about who has decision-making authority and who should be involved in what decisions, and who should be at the table, or how many chairs should be at the table.

00:33:25.100 --> 00:33:30.220

<v SPEAKER_2>So I can see that an American decision-maker is opposed, that's complicated.

00:33:31.320 --> 00:34:08.500

<v SPEAKER_2>But on the other hand, if they had done their homework a little bit more, they would probably also realize that if America came with a clear, substantiated wish to do something, that was a key national security priority from the United States, that was based in some form of rational threat assessment, I would see it as very difficult for Denmark and Greenland to say no.

00:34:08.500 --> 00:34:12.700

<v SPEAKER_2>Of course, a negotiation would follow.

00:34:14.140 --> 00:34:30.800

<v SPEAKER_2>But the point is also that oftentimes the because of what the US has acted perhaps not always as good as it could in Greenland, as is the case in many other places.

00:34:32.320 --> 00:34:58.720

<v SPEAKER_2>But because the relationship was managed between the US

and Denmark on behalf of Greenland, the local population as such has not, as is the case perhaps in some other places where the US has bases, doesn't feel, there's not a big sort of anti-American sentiment, or at least didn't used to be big anti-American sentiment in the Greenlandic population because they put blame on Copenhagen.

00:35:00.140 --> 00:35:03.240

<v SPEAKER_2>I have a colleague who have called that Copenhagen was a lightning rod.

00:35:03.820 --> 00:35:09.960

<v SPEAKER_2>So every time there was a problem in the trilingual relationship, blame ended at Copenhagen.

00:35:09.960 --> 00:35:30.380

<v SPEAKER_2>So for instance, in I think it's 68, a US B-52 bomber crash lands on the ice, close to what was in Tulip, carrying I think four nuclear bombs.

00:35:32.740 --> 00:35:40.280

<v SPEAKER_2>Local people are sent out to clean up and look for the bombs, because they got lost in the ice.

00:35:44.580 --> 00:35:49.620

<v SPEAKER_2>Denmark had a no nuclear policy on Danish territory policy at that point in time.

00:35:50.900 --> 00:35:55.380

<v SPEAKER_2>And the US was having nuclear weapons on Danish territory.

00:35:55.840 --> 00:36:04.140

<v SPEAKER_2>But actually, the US had a secret agreement with Denmark that it was okay that it had nuclear weapons in Greenland, not just in Denmark proper.

00:36:04.140 --> 00:36:09.500

<v SPEAKER_2>So this made it a Danish problem, not a US problem, because they had sort of done their homework.

00:36:13.800 --> 00:36:31.220

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think that, and of course, another issue, another thing that complicates is that there is this constant drive in Greenland for independence.

00:36:31.220 --> 00:36:43.500

<v SPEAKER_2>And I can also see that that perhaps plays a little bit into why the US feels concerned about the long-term relationship with Greenland.

00:36:43.500 --> 00:36:55.140

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think even though many Greenlanders will say independence, what they actually mean is more independence than is the case now.

00:36:58.120 --> 00:37:03.120

<v SPEAKER_2>No Greenlanders, there's only 56,000 Greenlanders living in Greenland.

00:37:03.200 --> 00:37:18.960

<v SPEAKER_2>And I thought of full independence with own armed forces and stuff like that is of course very difficult to foresee, so some kind of relationship with bigger allies would be necessary.

00:37:18.960 --> 00:37:34.860

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think also the Greenlandic population are very, even before Donald Trump tried to annex them, were acutely aware who is the real guarantor of their sovereignty and security.

00:37:35.320 --> 00:37:45.560

<v SPEAKER_2>So the Greenlandic politicians also have a clear interest in maintaining a good relationship with the United States.

00:37:45.560 --> 00:38:09.920

<v SPEAKER_1>So as I've listened to you walk through all that, I guess to me, confirming my original thoughts about this would be to say that the actual, that there's not a, there has not been a substantive strategic consideration to be addressed with Greenland because there have been long-standing existing mechanisms to address any strategic concerns the United States would have.

00:38:09.920 --> 00:38:22.380

<v SPEAKER_1>And that while some of those arrangements might have evolved, they all existed in a manner that would make them addressable from the viewpoint of Copenhagen.

00:38:22.380 --> 00:38:31.040

<v SPEAKER_1>So if I've captured that accurately, how then does Denmark interpret everything that has happened with the Trump administration?

00:38:33.920 --> 00:38:42.960

<v SPEAKER_2>I think that the administration here in Copenhagen and the administration in Nuuk have been on a sort of a learning, steep learning curve.

00:38:42.960 --> 00:38:48.400

<v SPEAKER_2>And I agree with your sort of summary of the situation.

00:38:48.400 --> 00:38:51.120

<v SPEAKER_2>Security concerns, well, you just come and ask.

00:38:52.300 --> 00:38:53.840

<v SPEAKER_2>Natural resources, okay.

00:38:53.840 --> 00:38:58.380

<v SPEAKER_2>Greenland's international slogan has been not for sale, but open for business.

00:38:58.380 --> 00:39:02.220

<v SPEAKER_2>So come extract our resources if you really want to.

00:39:05.060 --> 00:39:11.960

<v SPEAKER_2>And, okay, if you want to change how the burden is shared, well, Denmark is actually doing that.

00:39:11.960 --> 00:39:23.140

<v SPEAKER_2>It just invested, according to the Minister of Defence, 14 billion US dollars in new Arctic capability.

00:39:23.140 --> 00:40:13.260

<v SPEAKER_2>So things are being addressed or could easily be addressed, which leads all to me to the conclusion that this is, that this ties into some kind of cocktail that is made up between a radically new US vision of world politics, geopolitics and the US role in it, and the presidential ego wanting to be better than all his predecessors, wanting the Nobel Prize, wanting to make the US great again, both in terms of economy, but also in terms of territory.

00:40:13.260 --> 00:40:24.260

<v SPEAKER_2>And of course, Greenland is geographically part of the North American continent, and it sits on a strategic location, and it's big on a map.

00:40:24.260 --> 00:40:28.360

<v SPEAKER_2>It's even bigger on a map than it is in reality.

00:40:30.260 --> 00:40:35.740

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think it's those two things coming together.

00:40:35.740 --> 00:40:46.120

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that has also been reflected in the negotiations, that the argument has also changed from President Trump.

00:40:46.260 --> 00:40:49.760

<v SPEAKER_2>First, it was from international security concerns.

00:40:49.760 --> 00:40:51.940

<v SPEAKER_2>Then it was national security concerns.

00:40:51.940 --> 00:40:59.860

<v SPEAKER_2>Then it was Russian and Chinese ships sailing up and down the Greenlandic coast that nobody had heard of before because they didn't exist.

00:40:59.860 --> 00:41:10.000

<v SPEAKER_2>There is no Russian nor Chinese activity in Greenlandic territorial waters or in the areas immediately close to.

00:41:11.500 --> 00:41:20.200

<v SPEAKER_2>Then it was like a psychological need to own it because you didn't want to defend it if you didn't own it.

00:41:20.200 --> 00:41:24.000

<v SPEAKER_2>But nobody is talking about the defence of Greenland because there is no threat to Greenland.

00:41:24.000 --> 00:41:28.800

<v SPEAKER_2>There is a threat to the United States that can be addressed if you have a military presence in Greenland.

00:41:28.800 --> 00:41:32.020

<v SPEAKER_2>So it wouldn't be Greenland that the US would be defending.

00:41:32.020 --> 00:41:33.960

<v SPEAKER_2>It would be the United States defending.

00:41:33.960 --> 00:41:36.620

<v SPEAKER_2>So that didn't make sense either.

00:41:36.620 --> 00:41:39.520

<v SPEAKER_2>Then it was a psychological need again, as I said, to own it.

00:41:39.980 --> 00:41:43.780

<v SPEAKER_2>Then maybe it was something about the Golden Dome Missile Defense.

00:41:45.480 --> 00:41:50.320

<v SPEAKER_2>But okay, if that was the case, then he could have said that two months ago.

00:41:52.780 --> 00:42:02.620

<v SPEAKER_2>Evidently, it was not about burden sharing because then when Europe showed that it would be ready to bear the burden, then that was also a problem.

00:42:02.800 --> 00:42:11.180

<v SPEAKER_2>To me, that indicates that this was a vanity project

about making the US larger in a geographical sense, that it was before.

00:42:11.180 --> 00:42:25.980

<v SPEAKER_2>And then you could see the result in Davos, that when the pressure is too big, Donald Trump tries to find that out.

00:42:25.980 --> 00:42:29.560

<v SPEAKER_2>And let's see what happens.

00:42:29.560 --> 00:42:43.420

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think we can discuss what was the factors that made him change his position to the extent that he has changed his position, or at least have a new position now.

00:42:43.420 --> 00:42:45.620

<v SPEAKER_2>And then he will have another one.

00:42:45.620 --> 00:42:51.900

<v SPEAKER_2>But my analysis is that it has got more to do with US.

00:42:51.900 --> 00:42:56.820

<v SPEAKER_2>Treasury bonds and stock market than it has got to do with European unity.

00:42:59.280 --> 00:43:00.700

<v SPEAKER_1>Maybe just ask you to...

00:43:00.700 --> 00:43:06.280

<v SPEAKER_1>What is your sense of how you ended up at whatever level of agreement exists today?

00:43:06.280 --> 00:43:14.200

<v SPEAKER_1>And then I think as a last thought, where does Copenhagen's relationship with Washington go in the future after all of this?

00:43:16.820 --> 00:43:21.600

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, let's see what happens with the agreement.

00:43:21.600 --> 00:43:39.160

<v SPEAKER_2>I think the point is that both Greenland and Copenhagen, Greenland and Denmark will have stated and probably also will be forthcoming to a lot of this concrete demands or concrete vices that the US have put on.

00:43:39.160 --> 00:43:40.860

<v SPEAKER_2>More economic cooperation, yes.

00:43:41.440 --> 00:43:44.840

<v SPEAKER_2>A new US basis, yes.

00:43:44.840 --> 00:43:51.860

<v SPEAKER_2>A new sort of burden sharing between allies in the Arctic region, yes.

00:43:51.860 --> 00:44:00.320

<v SPEAKER_2>I think that is perfectly doable and we can think that's opening up the 51 Defence Agreement.

00:44:00.320 --> 00:44:05.860

<v SPEAKER_2>I think that is also something that can be discussed.

00:44:08.380 --> 00:44:38.280

<v SPEAKER_2>I think the reading or listening to Donald Trump, at least what he said at Davos, was basically him backing off or using the off ramp that had been given to him by Mark Rutte, which was to multilateralize the discussions that could then perhaps give him a win later.

00:44:38.280 --> 00:44:42.620

<v SPEAKER_2>Let's see if that stays the way it is.

00:44:43.680 --> 00:45:03.380

<v SPEAKER_2>The Danish government will probably work to, pragmatically, to give the US what the US wants, not crossing any Danish and Greenlandic red lines, which I think to be a bit blunt is sovereignty.

00:45:03.380 --> 00:45:04.760

<v SPEAKER_2>Anything else can be discussed.

00:45:06.620 --> 00:45:19.180

<v SPEAKER_2>But this will have substantial consequences for Denmark's relationship with the US in the future.

00:45:19.500 --> 00:45:21.240

<v SPEAKER_2>No doubt about it.

00:45:21.500 --> 00:45:26.860

<v SPEAKER_2>But the point is that this is not just about Denmark's relationship with the US.

00:45:26.860 --> 00:45:31.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Greenland became a canary in the coalmine.

00:45:33.480 --> 00:45:40.540

<v SPEAKER_2>For how everybody can expect that the US will behave, if Venezuela wasn't, then Greenland sure was.

00:45:40.540 --> 00:45:49.660

<v SPEAKER_2>How the US will behave, especially in relation to its traditional NATO allies.

00:45:49.700 --> 00:46:18.480

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think your Prime Minister, Carney's speech from Davos is, I think, what a lot of Europeans will also take with them from Davos and from the whole spectacle of Greenland is that the way the US sees itself in international relations is completely different from the...

00:46:24.012 --> 00:46:39.792

<v SPEAKER_2>Still superpower kind of logic, but superpower, seeing its own superpower, lastly, through how it could attract people instead of seeing it in this very transactional form.

00:46:39.792 --> 00:46:51.872

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think sort of an old political science, international relations thing you learn at the university is, is it one of or is it repeated games?

00:46:51.872 --> 00:47:02.332

<v SPEAKER_2>And Donald Trump works in one strategic interaction, whereas the rest of the world works in repeated interactions.

00:47:03.852 --> 00:47:17.392

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think the US will find, as Connie also said, that the power will wane because the power of attraction is waning, unfortunately.

00:47:17.392 --> 00:47:46.212

<v SPEAKER_2>And this makes for a very, very, very difficult and very, very dangerous situation, especially in Europe, because neither the will nor the funding, nor the organization for having an independent or autonomous strategic response to what is in Europe, the main threat, namely Russia exists.

00:47:46.212 --> 00:47:56.292

<v SPEAKER_2>Europe is fundamentally dependent on US military infrastructure to conduct a large scale operation, as it is at the moment, at least.

00:47:56.292 --> 00:48:08.732

<v SPEAKER_2>And now we haven't even talked about nuclear weapons, which of course is the most important infrastructure that Europe as such lacks, even though France, and to a certain extent, the UK has independent nuclear deterrent.

00:48:09.012 --> 00:48:39.612

<v SPEAKER_2>So we look into a very interesting, but also very

dangerous couple of years on how Europe will manage to disengage, to a certain extent, with the US, but still manage the fundamental dependency that Europe has with the US, especially in the military sense, but of course also in terms of the economy.

00:48:39.612 --> 00:48:42.972

<v SPEAKER_2>There the thing goes both ways, I guess, right?

00:48:44.372 --> 00:48:52.272

<v SPEAKER_2>That the US is also dependent on Europe in an economic sense, even though Donald Trump may not think that is the case.

00:48:53.472 --> 00:48:56.712

<v SPEAKER_1>Kristian, thank you so much for joining us on Defence Deconstructed.

00:48:56.712 --> 00:49:02.232

<v SPEAKER_1>It has been an extremely fascinating and very helpful walkthrough.

00:49:02.232 --> 00:49:06.972

<v SPEAKER_1>A very strange, I think is maybe the most neutral way to put it.

00:49:06.992 --> 00:49:11.612

<v SPEAKER_1>Yes, strange few weeks between allies.

00:49:11.612 --> 00:49:14.892

<v SPEAKER_1>The last question to you, what are you reading?

00:49:16.872 --> 00:49:22.892

<v SPEAKER_2>Not much, apart from politicians' speeches and statements.

00:49:23.432 --> 00:49:31.572

<v SPEAKER_2>But to be perfectly honest, and this is not because it's a Canadian podcast, but the last thing I read was actually Mark Carly's speech at Davos.

00:49:33.192 --> 00:49:39.192

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think it will resonate, it is resonating, it will resonate a lot in Europe.

00:49:39.192 --> 00:49:45.112

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think he eloquently put words to a lot of thinking going on here.

00:49:45.112 --> 00:49:51.192

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that is also being an Arctic scholar, one of the things that I will be interested in the future.

00:49:51.192 --> 00:49:54.312

<v SPEAKER_2>What will this actually mean for Arctic security?

00:49:54.312 --> 00:50:09.752

<v SPEAKER_2>Because if something good comes out of this, it will be a more integrated NATO allied, Canadian, European, even American, at some point, focus on Arctic security.

00:50:09.752 --> 00:50:15.552

<v SPEAKER_2>So that may be a silver lining in a very strange and crazy, as you say, situation.

00:50:15.552 --> 00:50:20.552

<v SPEAKER_1>Okay, well, Kristian, thanks again for joining us on Defence Deconstructed, very much appreciate it.

00:50:20.552 --> 00:50:21.452

<v SPEAKER_1>All the best.

00:50:21.452 --> 00:50:22.052

<v SPEAKER_2>No, you're welcome.

00:50:22.052 --> 00:50:23.372

<v SPEAKER_2>It was a pleasure.

00:50:24.752 --> 00:50:26.472

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for listening to Defence Deconstructed.

00:50:26.992 --> 00:50:32.432

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00:50:32.432 --> 00:50:39.012

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00:50:39.012 --> 00:50:41.632

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00:50:41.632 --> 00:50:45.272

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