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Greenland: Maybe an invasion(and maybe a backlash)

by Gwynne DyerOur World Today

The Crazy Gang are high on the ?brilliant success' of their Venezuela caper and looking for new targets. Like Alexander the Great, Donald Trump weeps because there are no more worlds to conquer. But wait! Actually, there are still lots of places to conquer.

Colombia is right next door to Venezuela and the US fleet is already just offshore, so how about taking down President Gustavo Petro? ?He's a sick man who likes making cocaine and sending it to the United States, and he's not going to be doing it very long,? according to The Donald (who is lying about Petro.)

?Operation Colombia sounds good to me,? Trump said on Monday. He also name-checked Mexico (?Something will have to be done about it?), Iran (?We are locked and loaded and ready to go!?) and Cuba (?It looks like it's ready to fall?). But any of these ?missions' would require lots of planning and moving military assets around. He wants another hit right now.

Instant triumphs tend to be smaller and less rewarding (arresting Russian-registered tankers in mid-ocean, for example). There is only one whole country on his list that Trump could conquer in one week from a standing start: Greenland. Which may be why Steve Miller, White House Deputy Chief of Staff, moved it to the top of the hit-list on Monday.

As a former colony that is still a self-governing part of the Danish kingdom, Greenland is not yet a completely sovereign state. But it can hold a referendum on full independence whenever its 57,000 people want, so it sort of qualifies as a country. Only a trophy country, but you would still get points for conquering it.

If I were completely ignorant of military matters, I would now copy and paste several paragraphs of White House hogwash explaining how strategically important Greenland is. I'd say that the Russians and the Chinese are casting lascivious eyes on the Arctic because there's valuable minerals there, and the sea lanes are opening up because the glaciers are melting.

Indeed, on Sunday Trump insisted that Greenland is ?so strategic right now, it's covered with Russian and Chinese ships all over the place. We need Greenland from the standpoint of national security.?

No, they don't. Greenland is a region of zero strategic importance. I spent some time on Greenland's west coast recently (Ilulissat), and Russian and Chinese ships were conspicuous by their total absence.

Greenland was briefly important strategically 60 to 70 years ago, when interceptors and radar stations based there might shoot down nuclear-armed Soviet bombers on their way to North America. Then the technology shifted to ballistic missiles that fly through space, and the number of troops on American airbases in Greenland dropped from 10,000 to 200.

If Washington wants to base more troops there now, it has only to ask: the treaty says it can have an unlimited number of bases and troops in Greenland. Similarly, if it wants some minerals, just negotiate a contract, start digging (and pay for them).

As for the ?sea lanes' across the Arctic, Russia's ?Northern Sea Route' connecting the Pacific to the Atlantic is getting busier. The ?Northwest Passage' around Greenland and northern Canada, however, will get little traffic until the ice is almost all gone (20+ years from now), because all the remaining ice tends to get trapped amongst Canada's Arctic islands.

On the other hand, if you just need ?threats' as cover for your imperial ambitions, there are plenty of experts who can find them for you at a modest price. Trump relentlessly broadcasts their ?findings'.

Given the servile posture (or just sheer laziness) of most American media, if Trump invades Greenland he would probably get away with it at home. However, he would not get away with it abroad.

The Russians and the Chinese would be happy to see the US invade Greenland, but for America to seize the territory of a country that has been a loyal member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for 77 years is a very bad look.

?Nobody's going to fight the United States militarily over the future of Greenland,? said Steve Miller confidently, and that's true. American air and naval power would quickly overwhelm any attempted Danish defence of Greenland, and there's no point in getting people killed for nothing.

However, the political and strategic impact would be immense. ?If the United States decides to militarily attack another NATO country,? warned Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, ?then everything would stop. That includes NATO and therefore post-Second World War security.?

A post-NATO alliance including every country except the United States would probably reform, but the enemy would be different. That might even be enough to shock American voters into starting the fightback in the mid-term elections in November. Or am I just clutching at straws?