CHANGING ARCTIC AGENDA AT THE DAVOS SUMMIT

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In the post-Cold War period, the Arctic region had long been associated primarily with environmental issues, but from the mid-2020s onward it has transformed into an area marked by great-power competition. As climate change keeps sea routes open for longer periods and increases the likelihood of discovering rich natural resources such as minerals, gas, and oil, the regions strategic importance has intensified and moved to the center of global politics. In this context, the growing interest and presence of multiple states, primarily the United States, Russia, and China, has turned the region into a new security race.[1]

Trumps statements at the World Economic Forum (WEF) held in Davos in January 2026 have transformed his long-standing strategic interest in Greenland into a concrete policy push and have become diplomatically contentious. For the United States, Russias increasing military presence in recent years and Chinas expanding economic investments after declaring itself a Near-Arctic State have made Greenlands strategic position even more significant.[2] Greenland is home to one of the critical sites within the U.S. ballistic missile early-warning network. Therefore, it is evident that Trump frames the region as an extension of U.S. security, and his recent remarks align with the hard security rhetoric prevalent in U.S. domestic politics. Washingtons Arctic policy is shaped by the Pentagons long-standing perception of a strategic gap in the region. Although Trump has attempted to fill this gap through harsh rhetoric and tariff threats, his approach has created diplomatic friction with Denmark, NATO, and regional actors. His latest remarks in Davos signal that he has pulled back from his earlier threats, emphasizing that he will not use military force in the Greenland issue and instead has agreed on a framework agreement under NATO.[3]

Overall, while long-standing great-power competition in the Arctic continues, the latest statements have given this dynamic a new momentum. The United States softer tone compared to earlier declarations suggests a shift toward a more diplomatic line that prioritizes cooperation with allies. However, Russias military buildup and Chinas economic/technological influence strategy continue to turn the region into a multi-polar arena of competition.[4] Therefore, although Trumps recent statements have temporarily lowered tensions, it is clear that the Arctic will witness a more sophisticated, multi-layered, and increasingly unpredictable power struggle in the coming years. While the

United States efforts to enhance coordination with its allies provide an advantage in this complex competitive environment, the strategic pressure in the region is unlikely to decrease in the medium term.

*Picure: ABC News

[1] https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2026/01/06/why-trump-is-claiming-the-us-needs-greenland-for-arctic-security/

[2] https://www.napforum.org/policy-briefs/beyond-the-bear-china-s-growing-arctic-threat

[3] https://www.turkiyetoday.com/world/us-to-coordinate-with-nato-on-greenland-under-indefinite-framework-trump-says-3213397

[4] https://www.inss.org.il/strategic_assessment/arctic/

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