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## Seeking to Legitimize American Conquest? A Response to Barry Scott Zellen

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Over my morning coffee, I was shocked to read the latest offering from Barry Scott Zellen, a frequent contributor to the Northern News Service (NNSL) directed at Northern Canadians, under the headline: “[After Venezuela, could Greenland really be next?](#)” This is an important question. In the end, as in previous stories that he has published, Dr. Zellen’s answer tries to discredit the Kingdom of Denmark as a weak, negligent, and violent colonial actor which has no right to Greenland. In so doing, Zellen seeks to legitimize the aggressive actions by the Trump Administration seeking to annex our eastern neighbour.

Given that much of our work focuses on the role of misinformation and narrative competition, we have seen this discrediting rhetoric before (from Russian and Chinese influencers, we should add) and take it seriously from a writer who is unabashedly seeking to advance US interests.

The critique of Danish colonial violence is a common refrain from Zellen, who continues to pitch himself as a former Yellowknife resident in his bylines. What is his background? He is an American who began his PhD studies at Harvard University much earlier in his career than he discloses on [his website](#), and that he has previously worked as “[Web Commando](#)” for the US Naval Postgraduate School from 2004-2012 and as the 1965 Arctic Scholar Chair at the US Coast Guard Academy.

We might also look a little closer at his writings.

[In another piece last year](#), he offered his “two cents on how to proceed and add a 51<sup>st</sup> star to the American flag! God bless Greenland. Let’s Make the Arctic Great Again!” In it, he lays out his ideas on “how to win the heart of feisty but outgunned Greenland” by offering them a “better deal” than the Danes that “they just can’t refuse” (explicitly invoking the words of fictitious mob boss Don Vito Corleone). His proposal is that Greenlanders should actually pay for the United States’ purchase of Greenland out of their own future resource revenues – meaning that the transaction “won’t cost the American taxpayer a single cent.” This leaves little doubt about where Zellen stands on this issue – have Greenlanders pay for their own absorption by the US. This is even worse than having Mexicans pay for a wall that they did not ask for or want.

In Zellen's latest piece in the *Hay River Hub*, he questions the idea that a "second assertion of the Trump Doctrine in Greenland must automatically be catastrophic." Instead, he suggests it might be liberating, akin to the US military action in Venezuela, given "deep moral injustices in past Danish colonial policies in Greenland, and the continued suffering that has resulted." He envisages "a confluence of humanitarian intervention, commercial interests (particularly rare earths and uranium), and national security once again aligning" and "providing justification for another implementation of the Trump Doctrine."

The acts of omission in Zellen's work are telling. Why not cast light on Trump's dismissive stance on Indigenous rights? After all, the US President completely wrote Indigenous Peoples out of his triumphalist narrative of American expansionism in his inaugural speech to Congress last year, and one of his first acts in office was to rename Denali as Mount McKinley. There is no talk of the US "trail of tears," or colonial trauma amongst Native Alaskans. Zellen never refers to the American displacement of Greenlanders living at Thule, now Pituffik Space Base, in the 1950s, and the ongoing trauma that this caused. Instead, he only targets the Danes.

Zellen is entitled to his opinions. It is important, however, that Northern Canadian audiences are aware of his political stance as a champion of Trump's quest to annex Greenland. Greenlanders have spoken unequivocally on this issue: Greenland is "not for sale." Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen stated [last week in a joint news conference](#) with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen of Denmark that "If we have to choose between the United States and Denmark here and now, we choose Denmark. We choose NATO, the Kingdom of Denmark and the European Union." Zellen should respect the will of the Greenlandic people and not try to weaponize their colonial past to rationalize an American conquest.