

Global Watch Weekly Briefing

The second week of January 2026 has witnessed a profound and volatile realignment of the international system, characterized by the erosion of traditional alliances and the rise of aggressive unilateralism. From the fjords of Greenland to the streets of Tehran, the "rules-based order" is being replaced by a transactional reality defined by raw power and territorial interests.

The Arctic Standoff and NATO's Identity Crisis

Perhaps the most startling development this week was the escalating crisis over Greenland. President Trump's fixation on acquiring the island as a "national security imperative" for missile defense has pushed the U.S.-Denmark relationship to a breaking point. The president explicitly stated that Denmark is incapable of defending the territory against Russian and Chinese interests, arguing that U.S. "ownership" is essential for installing advanced defense systems.

The rhetoric turned into physical reality when European NATO allies—led by Britain, Germany, Sweden, and Norway—deployed a multinational reconnaissance mission to Nuuk to deter potential U.S. annexation. This rare show of European defiance, documented by *The Guardian*, signals a historic shift as traditional allies scramble to define a "muscular" strategic autonomy outside the NATO framework. Simultaneously, a U.S. congressional delegation arrived in Copenhagen to counter the administration's threats and reaffirm support for Danish sovereignty. Security experts at Chatham House have ranked this standoff as a top global risk, warning it could lead to the permanent collapse of the NATO alliance.

A New Hemispheric Reality

In the Western Hemisphere, the fallout from the U.S. military intervention in Venezuela continues to reverberate. The capture of Nicolás Maduro marks a revival of the Monroe Doctrine—rebranded as the "Donroe Doctrine"—signaling a shift toward direct regional dominance to control vast oil reserves and redirect flows away from China. While the U.S. Senate has backed Trump on Venezuela war powers, with Vice President Vance casting a tie-breaking vote, the move has created a deepening rift with regional powers.

Mexico has categorically rejected the "interventionist" move as a violation of sovereignty, while Canada has maintained a cautious silence as it navigates trade reviews. Amidst this, Maduro faces trial in New York on narco-terrorism charges, while Trump has already held closed-door meetings at Mar-a-Lago with opposition figure Maria Corina Machado to discuss oil sector reforms.

Global Realignment Toward Beijing

As Washington pivots toward protectionism and unilateralism, middle powers are pragmatically hedging their bets. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's "historic" strategic partnership with China, secured this week in Beijing, underscores this trend. Rebuffed by U.S. trade policies, Ottawa has opted for deep cooperation in energy, agriculture, and finance with Beijing.

Similarly, Taiwan has attempted to secure its own position through a high-stakes \$250 billion trade deal with the U.S.. Taipei is trading massive investments in American semiconductors, energy, and AI for tariff relief, a move Beijing has "resolutely opposed" as a violation of the "One-China" principle.

The Middle East Tinderbox

The administration's "maximum pressure" on Iran has reached a breaking point, with a 25% tariff threatened against any nation—specifically targeting China and India—that continues to trade with Tehran. As domestic protests in Iran turn deadly, with tolls surpassing 2,600, Tehran has warned it will strike U.S. bases in the region if Washington intervenes. This led the Pentagon to quietly extract personnel from key bases in Qatar and Bahrain. Amidst the chaos, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan are moving toward a "nuclear-backed" trilateral defense pact, suggesting regional powers are increasingly hedging against U.S. unreliability.

Ends