Commentary
January 13, 2026

US, Venezuela, and Greenland: Three long-term consequences

Yauheni Preiherman

Originally published by Caliber.az

Summary

The U.S. military operation in Venezuela and the newly intensified claims over Greenland, regardless of how events unfold, will have long-term consequences. At a minimum, these can be seen in three key areas: the future of the Western Hemisphere, the likely formation of counterbalancing coalitions against the U.S., and domestic political struggles within the United States itself.

Contents

1 What will the “Donroe Doctrine” lead to?
2 The inevitable formation of counterbalancing anti-US coalitions
3 A new phase of domestic political struggle in the US

As soon as we wrapped up 2025—a year in which Donald Trump bulldozed through American domestic politics and international relations—the first days of January 2026 brought even more astonishing news. This primarily concerns the U.S. military operation in Venezuela and the surge of Washington’s claims over Greenland that followed in its wake.

Neither of these events was a “black swan.” The U.S. had been preparing for military action in Venezuela for quite some time—and very publicly at that. It was therefore obvious that something would happen there, and that the conflict could not be resolved through diplomatic means alone. Of course, predicting exactly what would ultimately occur was probably impossible.

The situation with Greenland is similar. When Trump first announced a year ago that he wanted to annex the island to the United States, it caused shock and widespread bewilderment. However, the topic quickly became a joke, discussed with a smile as if it

were some fantasy from an imaginary world. Now, after Nicolás Maduro's capture, Washington's claims on Greenland have taken on new intensity and emotion. Few are willing to joke about it anymore—especially the U.S.'s European NATO allies.

Global media and political circles will continue to buzz about these two developments for a long time, no matter how events unfold. And there is plenty to discuss, as the consequences of both will be significant and long-lasting—particularly in three areas that deserve close attention: the future of the Western Hemisphere, the likely formation of informal counterbalancing coalitions against the U.S. worldwide, and domestic political struggles within the United States itself.

What will the "Donroe Doctrine" lead to?

As the recently released U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) openly proclaims, the Trump administration views the Western Hemisphere as its main geopolitical priority—a zone of exclusive influence and privileged interests.

> This means that in South, Central, and North America, Washington declares zero tolerance even for the hint of a competitor's presence.

From this stems the announced return to the Monroe Doctrine—albeit on steroids—a policy the White House now calls the "Donroe Doctrine" (from Donald + Monroe).

As we have emphasised in our analysis of the NSS text, this prioritisation of the Western Hemisphere automatically places it outside the scope of another important declaration in the document—the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of foreign states. For the Trump administration, such a concept simply does not exist regarding the American hemisphere. It openly and unabashedly states that it will not hesitate for a single second if it perceives any threat in the region that requires intervention in domestic affairs or even actions outside the norms of international law.

This is exactly what the U.S. demonstrated in Venezuela. Moreover, it appears to have been done deliberately—to leave no doubt anywhere in the world about the American government's resolve and its willingness to take the harshest, most resounding measures to defend its own interests.

From this situation, at least two important and highly interesting questions arise—answers that only time can provide. And those answers will determine much about the future structure of both the Western Hemisphere and the world as a whole.

First, does this tough and uncompromising Donroe Doctrine signal that Washington is proposing to structure the future international order around a new concert of great powers, each with its own exclusive sphere of influence?

Such assessments are now circulating widely in Western media. For example, the authoritative former head of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, Richard Haass, interprets the Trump administration's operation in Venezuela as evidence that a "global order that has endured for 80 years is on the verge of being replaced by three regional orders." In his view, the other two regional orders will now form around China and Russia.

However, there are strong reasons to believe that such expectations are rather superficial. Yes, under Trump, the U.S. is clearly showing little interest in pursuing active policies in every corner of the globe. But nothing in its rhetoric or actions suggests a willingness to simply divide the world amicably with China and Russia. On the contrary!

Washington's total control over the Western Hemisphere is primarily aimed at eliminating the risk of Chinese influence on its doorstep and thereby strengthening its competitive position in the long-term strategic rivalry with Beijing. The same logic applies to the U.S.'s refusal to engage universally in every regional issue around the world.

> To maximise its competitiveness against China, it is crucial to concentrate the main efforts and resources on key priorities rather than dispersing them across peripheral interests.

Second, how will other states react in practice to the new "Monroe Doctrine on steroids"? Here, the responses of both the American states themselves—which the U.S. has now officially included in its zone of exclusive interests without the right to object—and other global great powers, whose military, political, and economic presence in the Western Hemisphere Washington has declared illegal, are important. The initial reactions to the U.S.'s decisive and far-reaching actions from both groups reflect confusion and an awareness of Washington's dominant power. But it is by no means certain that this will continue even within the Western Hemisphere.

The inevitable formation of counterbalancing anti-US coalitions

History and the theory of international relations give us a clear understanding of what is likely to happen next. One of the inevitable consequences of Washington's forceful actions and declarations, even in the relatively near term, will be the formation of so-

called “counterbalancing coalitions” against the United States.

Such coalitions will not necessarily take any formal shape. In other words, this is not about creating full-fledged anti-American alliances. Moreover, given the structural realities of today’s transforming world, it can even be argued that formal alliances against the U.S. will not emerge. But these processes will happen in practice.

> Countries across various regions will seek greater cooperation with third-party actors to reduce and diversify their dependence on Washington, even if only slightly. This will be done with varying levels of activity and publicity by both traditional U.S. opponents and its allies.

And for a simple reason: it is a law of nature—if someone is too powerful and does not hesitate to exercise that power, those around them develop an objective need to do something about it, to somehow minimise their own vulnerability.

U.S. Ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker called the operation in Venezuela part of a strategy to contain Washington’s geopolitical competitors. Clearly, those competitors will respond with their own containment strategies directed at the United States. And, once again, we should emphasise—it will not be only the competitors.

European countries find themselves in the most delicate position under these circumstances. As Politico notes, the rhetorical escalation over Greenland “has ended any remaining complacency in Brussels.” The publication cites an unnamed diplomat from an EU member state, who stressed in this context that Europeans must now “be ready for a direct confrontation with Trump.”

Clearly, there can be a huge gap between words—especially those hidden behind the anonymity of bureaucrats—and actual actions. This is particularly true in the European context, where EU countries remain entirely dependent on the American security umbrella. Nevertheless, they are still forced to respond in some way to what is happening.

So far, their responses have mostly amounted to ambiguous rhetoric and attempts to find situational, tactical solutions. The entire administrative structure of the European Union, under current circumstances, makes strategic-level responses nearly impossible, not to mention the Europeans’ total dependence on the U.S. However, in the longer term, even the EU should be expected to attempt to construct at least some form of counterbalance to Washington’s actions, which increasingly clash with the expectations and interests of European elites.

A new phase of domestic political struggle in the US

One avenue for European efforts to limit the Trump administration's ability to make foreign policy decisions without considering European opinion and interests will be lobbying within the United States. Europeans will try to exploit internal American divisions and the heightened political struggle, which in some respects resembles a revolution.

Such efforts are already underway. For example, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski called on the U.S. Congress to make its voice heard regarding President Trump's ambitions to take control of Greenland—that is, part of Danish territory. Similar calls have been made to limit the U.S. executive branch's ability to conduct military operations, including in Venezuela, without legislative approval. Notably, on 8 January, the U.S. Senate approved a procedural vote on a resolution prohibiting American troops from participating in military actions against Venezuela without Congress's sanction.

> In practice, this legislative step changes little, but it carries symbolic weight in the context of domestic political struggles, which, against the backdrop of the Venezuela operation and statements on Greenland, could enter a new phase.

This struggle is not only about voter support between Republicans and Democrats but also about constitutional powers between the presidential branch and Congress. As the American legal scholar Edward Corwin once wrote, the U.S. Constitution is "an invitation to struggle for the privilege of directing American foreign policy." This is therefore another long-term issue that now deserves close attention.

Yauheni Preiherman
Director, Minsk Dialogue Council on International Relations