

TECHNOLOGY US official says Nvidia has begun shipping powerful H200 AI chips to China

GLOBAL NEWS

## From Venezuela to Greenland, now back to Iran again?

AWANI  
INTERNATIONAL

Reuters

27/01/2026 | 19:40 MYT



US President Donald Trump's foreign policy from Greenland threats to Iran tensions heightens global friction and shows the limits of US pressure. - REUTERS/Filepic

AS 2026 dawned, the world watched in disbelief as the [United States launched a military operation in Venezuela on January 3](#) that resulted in the overthrow and capture of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife — forcibly transported to New York to face charges in U.S. courts, a dramatic gambit justified by Washington as targeting “[narco-terrorism](#).”

Before the dust had settled from that intervention, the White House ignited a fresh diplomatic firestorm by [threatening to seize Greenland](#), a Danish autonomous territory, “[by all means necessary](#)” unless Denmark ceded sovereignty — a threat that strained transatlantic relations and provoked European resistance.

Only after pushback from European capitals did President Donald Trump step back from outright annexation, pivoting toward a negotiated “[framework deal](#)” that would expand U.S. military access without violating Danish

sovereignty.

But even as that crisis subsided, the global spotlight snapped westward to the Middle East: Washington has now dispatched [a U.S. naval armada toward Iran](#) against the backdrop of nationwide unrest and intensifying tensions between Tehran and the United States.

These successive flashpoints suggest a foreign policy operating at full throttle — bold, unilateral, and fraught with peril.

Yet beneath the headlines lies a deeper strategic quandary, especially in relation to Iran.

### Trump's Post-JCPOA World

During his first presidential term (2017–2021), Donald Trump infamously withdrew the United States from the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#), the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran.

He argued that the deal, while constraining Iran's uranium enrichment, did nothing to curb its [development of ballistic missiles](#), support for regional proxy forces, or intervention in neighbouring states. Washington reimposed sweeping sanctions in pursuit of what it dubbed "maximum pressure."

The result was strategic backfire: Iran [accelerated elements of its nuclear program beyond JCPOA limits](#), hardline factions consolidated power in Tehran, and regional tensions spiked.

The absence of meaningful mechanisms within the JCPOA to rein in Iran's missile programs and proxy networks was a central flaw that Trump's administration sought to exploit — but ultimately could not fix through withdrawal alone.

### Second Term Escalations and the Nuclear Question

The pattern of coercion continued into Trump's second term.

In the summer of 2025, U.S. and allied strikes [targeted select Iranian nuclear facilities](#), degrading infrastructure but not eliminating the program entirely.

That episode marked a significant escalation — the first direct U.S. strikes on Iran's enrichment sites — and underscored the limits of kinetic force to resolve nuclear stalemate.

Now, in January 2026, Washington has signalled its resolve anew by [mobilizing carrier strike groups toward the Persian Gulf](#), a clear message that American patience is finite as Iran continues its enrichment, missile development, and [support for groups such as Hezbollah](#), the Houthis, and militias in Iraq and Syria.

### Iran's Strategic Trinity

What does the U.S. really want? In public statements and diplomatic backchannels, Washington has [pressed Iran to halt](#) its nuclear program beyond peaceful research, cease backing of proxy actors across the Middle East and curtail its ballistic missile development.

Taken together, these form a strategic trinity that is virtually sacred to the [Islamic Republic's national defence doctrine](#).

They are not easily divisible; Tehran sees each component as a pillar of deterrence and regime survival.

For Iran's leaders — from the Supreme Leader to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) — these programs are not optional concessions.

They represent a comprehensive security architecture deemed essential in a region where conventional military capacities are dominated by U.S. and allied forces.

In that sense, U.S. demands are a high-threshold ultimatum: expectations that Tehran simply will not, and perhaps cannot, meet without existential risk to its own regime logic. The result is a strategic impasse.

### Regime Change: The Only Remaining Option?

If diplomacy and pressure cannot bring Iran to heel, what then?

For Washington, regime change looms as the only viable alternative — but not in the abstract.

The insistence that Iran must abandon its strategic trinity effectively amounts to seeking a leadership change that would reorient Tehran's core doctrines.

Yet advocating for regime change plunges the United States into a complex moral and geopolitical dilemma.

How?

Any overt push to topple Tehran's leadership risks full-scale war with a defiant regional adversary.

It could trigger [broader spillover conflicts](#) involving proxies and adversaries.

It may disrupt [global energy markets](#), with Iran being a major oil producer.

It challenges the international norm against unilateral interventions under the [UN Charter](#).

Moreover, Iranian domestic dissent — fuelled by economic hardship and political repression — does not assure a liberal or Western-aligned successor. A power vacuum could just as easily empower even more uncompromising actors.

### Unintended Consequences and the Limits of Power

Trump's recent flurry of foreign policy moves — from Venezuela to Greenland to Iran — reflects a worldview that prizes assertiveness over multilateral constraint.

Yet the volatility it has unleashed underscores a hard truth: [military might and unilateral pressure alone cannot solve foundational geopolitical conflicts](#).

In the case of Iran, the United States faces a dilemma not merely of tactics, but of strategy.

Demands that require Tehran to dismantle its strategic core without offering a viable pathway to mutual security produce only stalemate and escalation.

What is required instead is an approach that recognizes the limits of coercion while seeking mechanisms — whether through renewed negotiation frameworks, regional security architectures, or calibrated [confidence-building measures](#) — to address the very fears driving Iran's strategic behaviour.

From Venezuela to Greenland to Iran, 2026 may come to be seen as an [inflection point in global order](#) — not because of a decisive American victory, but because of the stark limits of power in a multipolar world increasingly resistant to unilateral dictates.

The question now is not simply whether Iran relents, but whether the United States can imagine a strategy that

both protects its interests and avoids catastrophic confrontation.

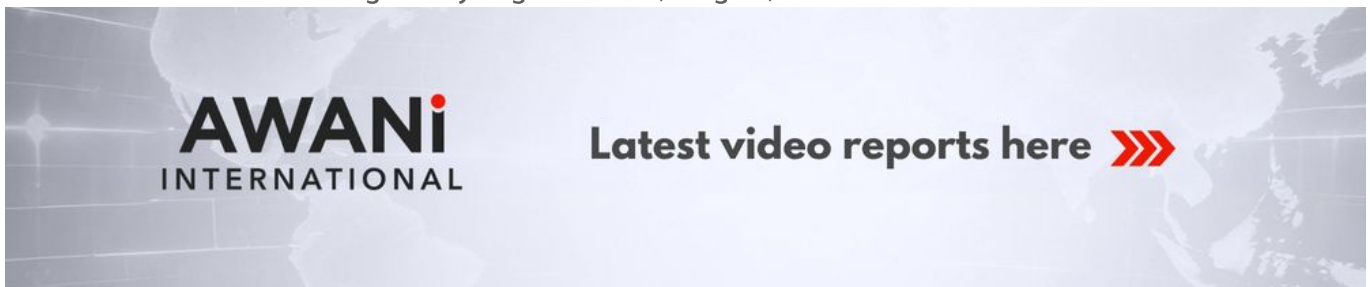
---

*Phar Kim Beng, PhD, is Professor of ASEAN Studies and Director of the Institute of Internationalisation and ASEAN Studies (IINTAS) at the International Islamic University Malaysia.*

*Luthfy Hamzah is Senior Research Fellow at IINTAS and a specialist in trade, political economy, and strategic diplomacy in Northeast Asia.*

*\*\* The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the position of Astro AWANI.*

Your gateway to global news, insights, and stories that matter.



Cara lain mengikuti berita kami



## Recommended For You

- [Iran threatens to block more vital seaways as Trump orders renewed Iran blockade](#)
- [Death toll in Thai pub fire rises to 32, officials say, with dozens still in hospital](#)
- [US official says Nvidia has begun shipping powerful H200 AI chips to China](#)

---

## Related Topics

#Donald Trump #Iran #Greenland #West Asia #English News

## Must Watch Video