
Recent U.S. Actions on Venezuela: Power, Legitimacy, Energy, and the Future of Global Order

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Abstract

The long-standing relationship between the United States and Venezuela has been shaped by ideology, energy geopolitics, and regional security concerns. Over the past decade, this relationship has shifted from diplomatic estrangement and economic sanctions to a more assertive, security-focused engagement. Recent U.S. measures targeting the Venezuelan leadership, including unprecedented enforcement actions against the Maduro regime, mark a significant turning point in hemispheric politics. Washington primarily justifies these actions through counter-narcotics efforts, democratic accountability, and regional security. In contrast, critics view them as violations of sovereignty and international law, driven by energy and geopolitical interests. This paper explores the background of Venezuela's political and economic crisis, the evolution of U.S.–Venezuela relations over the past decade, and the U.S. military's attempt to capture President Maduro and his wife. Finally, the paper analyses the geopolitics of this incident and addresses four major research questions: U.S. influence in the Americas and the Atlantic; the U.S. energy market; whether Russia should end the Russia-Ukraine war to strengthen its global role in light of multipolarity; and the impact of such unilateral actions on the world order.

Keywords: Venezuela, United States foreign policy, sanctions, oil geopolitics, narcotics trafficking, Russia, United Nations Security Council, Latin America

1. Introduction

Venezuela holds a contradictory role in global politics. Possessing the world's largest proven oil reserves, it should theoretically be one of the most economically stable nations among developing countries. Instead, it has become a symbol of political failure, economic downfall, humanitarian crises, and international conflict. Over the past decade, Venezuela has transitioned from a troubled democracy to a highly disputed political system whose legitimacy is rejected by significant parts of its population and key international players.

Venezuela holds multiple strategic importance for the United States, encompassing regional stability, democratic governance, narcotics flow, migration issues, and energy geopolitics. U.S. policy has shifted through various stages—starting with diplomatic efforts, followed by broad

economic sanctions, then targeted engagement via oil licenses, and more recently, direct coercive measures.

The escalation of U.S. actions against the Venezuelan leadership must be viewed within a broader global context. The post–Cold War belief that multilateral institutions and norms would limit unilateral power has diminished considerably. Instead, major powers increasingly pursue national interests through selective enforcement of international law, economic coercion, and direct actions justified by security concerns. Venezuela exemplifies one of the clearest areas where this shift is evident.

This paper aims to thoroughly analyze recent U.S. actions toward Venezuela by exploring several interconnected questions. How have U.S.–Venezuela relations worsened over the past decade? What political and economic factors within Venezuela influence external intervention? To what degree are drug trafficking allegations used as legal justifications versus strategic narratives? Why does Venezuela’s oil wealth continue to attract international interest despite declining production? How has Nicolás Maduro maintained his hold on power amid ongoing internal and external pressures? What roles do Russia and the United Nations play in shaping the global response? Finally, what are the wider geopolitical consequences of these developments for the international order? By analysing all these the paper will focus on four research questions:

1.1 How do recent U.S. actions toward Venezuela reflect broader strategic objectives aimed at consolidating economic, military, and maritime influence across the Western Hemisphere, including the Caribbean and Atlantic sea lanes?

1.2 What role do energy considerations play in U.S. policy toward Venezuela—specifically, how do sanctions, military actions, and control over oil flows relate to U.S. interests as both a major hydrocarbon producer and exporter?

1.3 Should Russia end the Russia-Ukraine war to strengthen its global role in light of multipolarity?

1.4 What implications does the normalisation of such unilateral actions have for smaller states’ sovereignty and the credibility of multilateral institutions, including the United Nations Security Council?

2. Methodology and Analytical Framework

This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach to geopolitical analysis, rooted in international relations theory, energy geopolitics, and international law. It is non-empirical and does not employ statistical methods; instead, it focuses on a structured evaluation of secondary sources, policy documents, and established theoretical frameworks.

2.1 The paper uses four analytical lenses:

- (a) sovereignty and intervention theory in international relations,
- (b) energy geopolitics and resource power,
- (c) strategic realism and hemispheric security doctrines, and
- (d) norms and institutional legitimacy within the UN-centred international system.

2.2. Sources were selected using the following criteria:

- (a) peer-reviewed academic literature;
- (b) official publications from governments, international organisations, and energy agencies; and
- (c) established policy research institutions.

2.3. Media reports served solely as contextual background and were cross-verified when feasible.

It is important to note that the analysis does not seek to confirm the factual accuracy of operational military claims but instead focuses on how these actions—whether real or hypothetical—could influence geopolitical norms, energy markets, and the international order. Conclusions are drawn through comparative reasoning, theory-based inference, and pattern analysis based on similar historical cases.

3. Background

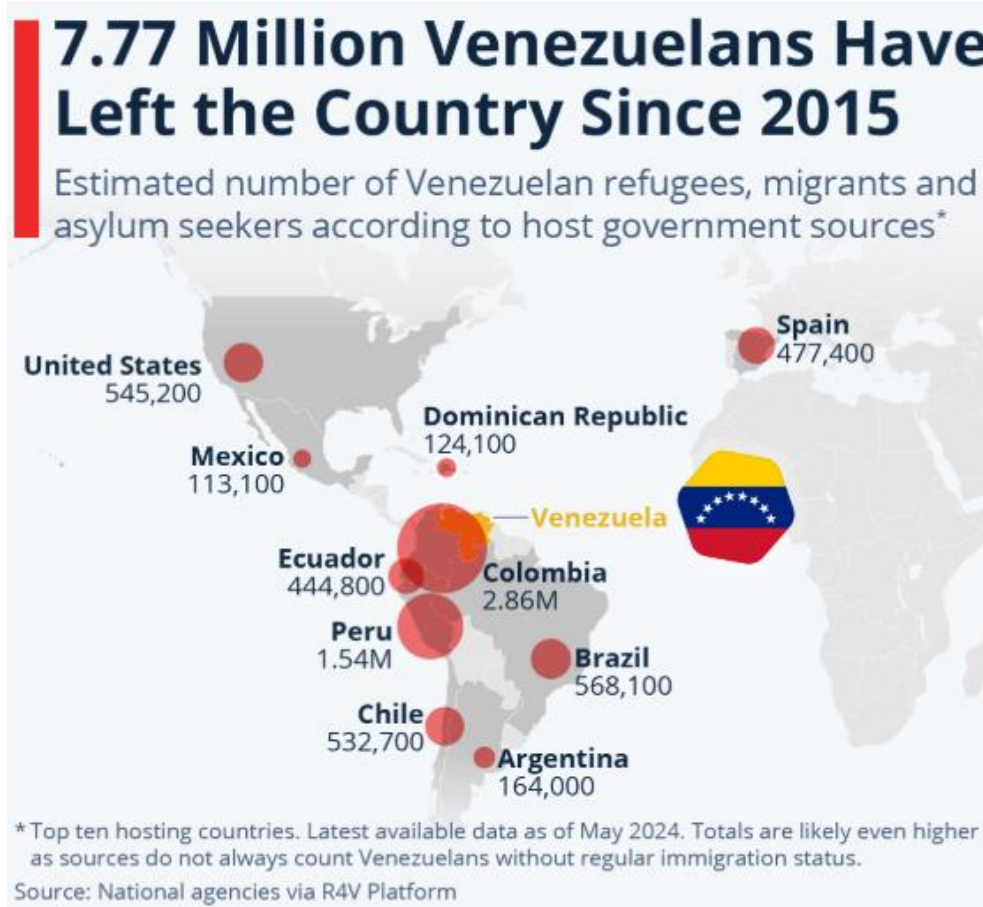
3.1 Venezuela's Political and Economic Crisis

The roots of Venezuela's contemporary crisis lie in a combination of structural economic weaknesses, institutional decay, and political polarization. Long before the imposition of U.S. sanctions, Venezuela's economy suffered from extreme dependence on oil revenues, weak diversification, and heavy state intervention. The collapse of global oil prices in the mid-2010s exposed these vulnerabilities, triggering hyperinflation, currency collapse, and severe shortages of essential goods.

Politically, the erosion of democratic institutions accelerated as executive power expanded at the expense of the legislature, judiciary, and independent electoral authorities. Successive elections were increasingly contested domestically and internationally, contributing to a crisis of legitimacy. Opposition movements, though periodically mobilizing mass public support, struggled with fragmentation, leadership disputes, and repression.

The humanitarian consequences of this crisis have been profound. Millions of Venezuelans migrated to neighboring countries and beyond, creating one of the largest displacement crises in the Western Hemisphere. This mass migration not only destabilised Venezuela internally but also imposed economic and social pressures on regional states, thereby internationalising the crisis.

Figure 1: Map showing Venezuelans Migration out of country since 2015

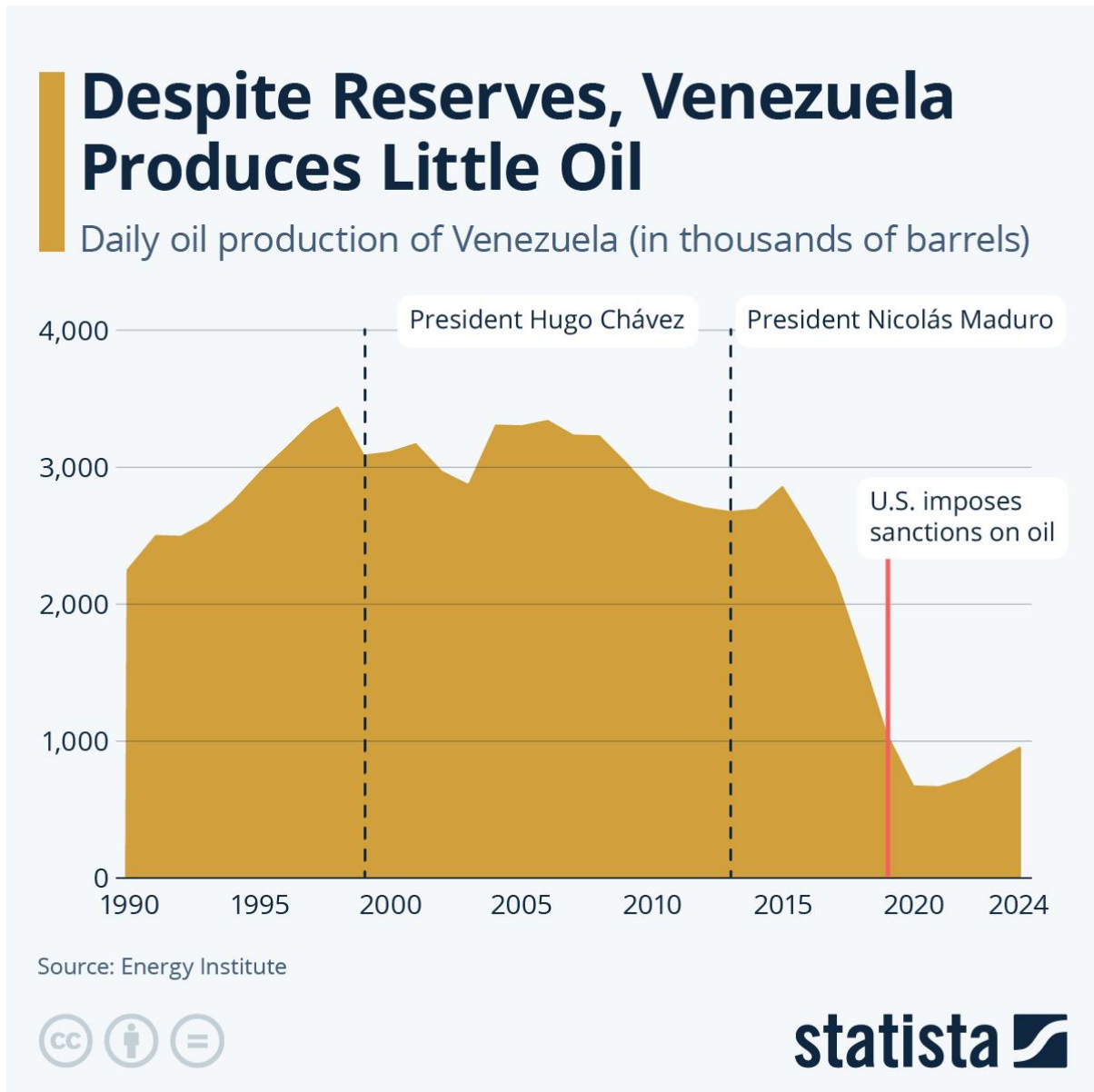


Source: Statista data <https://www.statista.com/chart/28512/main-destinations-of-venezuelans/?srsltid=AfmBOooaasNBiOIuzquG-EOig9TAGp8fgpWidykrzAkgxMppBQ2Yheb>

3.2. Political and Economic Conditions in Contemporary Venezuela

Politically, Venezuela remains characterized by centralized authority, limited political competition, and heavy reliance on security institutions. The executive branch dominates governance, while opposition activity is often restricted through legal and administrative measures. The political environment thus hampers chances for a genuine democratic transition. Venezuela’s economy is still fragile, despite some recent stabilization. Inflation has decreased from its peak, and there is some private-sector activity in urban areas. However, the economy remains weak, with oil production well below historical levels and public services in poor condition. A notable aspect of the current economy is the growth of informal and shadow networks that help evade sanctions, find alternative ways to sell oil, and support survival for elites and ordinary citizens. While these networks offer short-term stability, they also weaken institutional governance and transparency.

Figure 2: Venezuela Oil production figures



Source; <https://www.statista.com/chart/35625/oil-production-venezuela/?srsltid=AfmBOopFwEH7gnimTpy3IjXf-65dEeihDbiw-bEol88rECa-u4ei9Hxi>

3.3. Venezuela's Oil Reserves and Energy Geopolitics

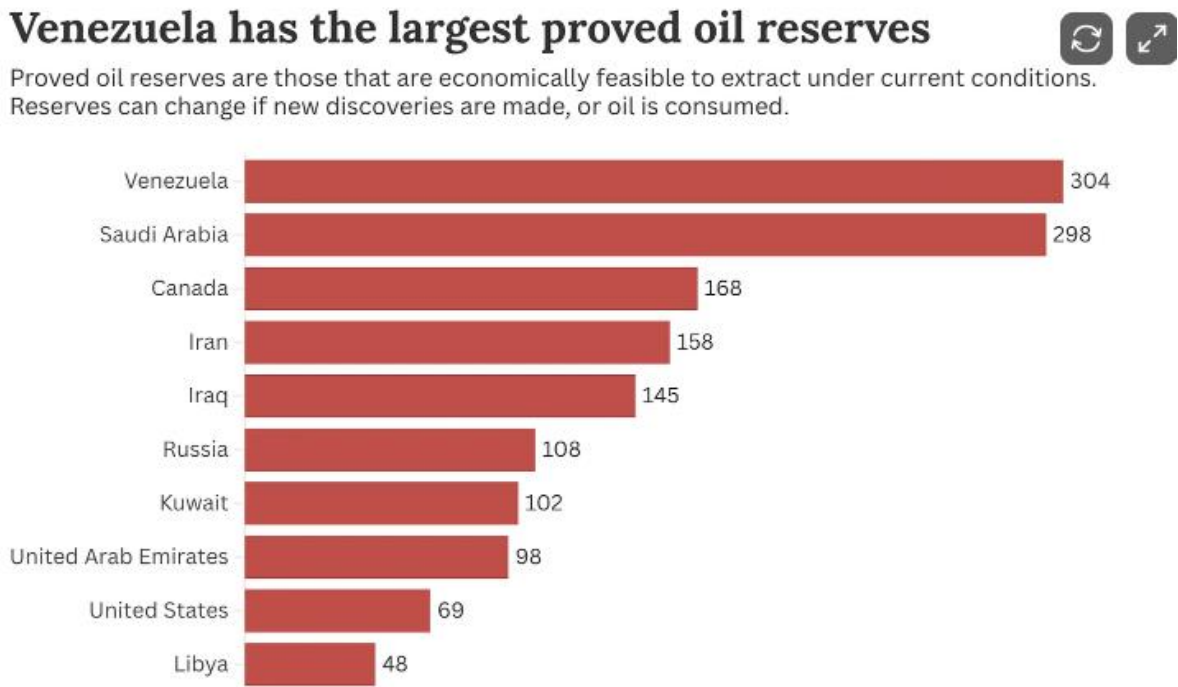
Venezuela's oil reserves remain central to its geopolitical significance. The country possesses the world's largest proven reserves, primarily concentrated in the Orinoco Belt. However, much of this oil is extra-heavy crude that requires advanced technology, significant capital investment, and stable regulatory conditions to exploit effectively.

Decades of underinvestment, mismanagement, and sanctions have severely reduced Venezuela’s production capacity. Nonetheless, the sheer scale of its reserves ensures sustained international interest, particularly during periods of global energy uncertainty. For the United States, Venezuela’s oil represents both a strategic asset and a policy dilemma: re-engagement could stabilize markets but risks legitimizing an authoritarian regime.

Energy geopolitics thus intersects directly with political strategy. Control over oil revenues influences regime survival, while external access to Venezuelan oil shapes broader market dynamics. This interdependence complicates simplistic narratives of sanctions as purely moral or purely economic tools.

Figure 3: Proven Crude Reserves of Venezuela as compared to other countries

Source: Energy Institute, Statistical Review of World Energy.



Data Source: Energy Institute, Statistical Review of World Energy (2025) • Data is for 2020, and measured in billions of barrels.

3.4. Nicolás Maduro’s Hold on Power

Despite sustained internal dissent and external pressure, Nicolás Maduro has maintained power through a combination of institutional control, security force loyalty, and strategic alliances. The military plays a central role in governance, benefiting from economic privileges and political influence. Intelligence and security agencies further suppress opposition activity.

Patronage networks distribute scarce resources to key constituencies, reinforcing loyalty amid economic hardship. At the same time, the regime has demonstrated tactical flexibility, offering concessions such as prisoner releases or limited electoral reforms when under intense international pressure.

External partnerships also contribute to regime resilience. Diplomatic, economic, and security ties with non-Western powers reduce isolation and provide alternative sources of support, enabling the regime to withstand sanctions more effectively than anticipated.

3.5. María Corina Machado and the Future of Opposition Politics

Within Venezuela's opposition landscape, María Corina Machado has emerged as a prominent figure advocating a hard-line stance against the Maduro regime. Her political trajectory reflects both the aspirations and constraints of opposition politics in an authoritarian context.

Machado's international engagement, particularly with Western policymakers, positions her as a potential transitional leader. However, her effectiveness depends on opposition unity, institutional pathways for change, and the balance between external support and domestic legitimacy. The future of Venezuela's opposition will significantly influence whether external pressure translates into sustainable political transformation or prolonged instability.

4. US Intervention in Venezuela

4.1. U.S.–Venezuela Relations over the Last Decade

Over the past ten years, U.S.–Venezuela relations have shifted from strained diplomacy to almost complete rupture. Following disputed elections and allegations of democratic backsliding, the United States gradually imposed targeted sanctions against Venezuelan officials, later broadening these measures to include state-owned enterprises, such as the national oil company, PDVSA. Sanctions were aimed to pressurise the Venezuelan leadership into political concessions while minimizing harm to civilians. However, they became closely linked to Venezuela's economic collapse, making it difficult to assess responsibility. U.S. officials claimed the sanctions targeted corruption and authoritarianism, but critics argued they worsened civilian suffering and strengthened the regime.

By the early 2020s, U.S. policy showed signs of tactical adjustment. Limited oil licenses were granted to select companies in response to global energy market disruptions, reflecting Washington's pragmatic acknowledgment of Venezuela's potential role in stabilizing oil supply. This oscillation between pressure and engagement highlighted the inherent contradictions in U.S. policy objectives.

U.S. oil companies once played a significant role in Venezuela's oil industry, especially in the rich Orinoco Belt and in major drilling projects with local and international partners. During the early and mid-20th century, companies like ExxonMobil, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips led exploration, extraction, and refining efforts, investing heavily with advanced technology and

infrastructure, which helped establish Venezuela as a leading global oil producer. However, starting with the 1976 nationalization, Venezuela took control of its resources by creating *Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)* to replace foreign concessionaires. In the 2000s, under President Hugo Chávez, the government further increased control by forcing foreign partners to accept new terms favoring PDVSA, reducing the operational independence and profits of U.S. firms. ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips exited, engaging in lengthy arbitration over expropriated assets, resulting in billions of dollars in awards, while Chevron negotiated limited joint ventures under strict conditions to stay operational. These policies, along with years of legal and political instability, damaged U.S. investments, restricted access to Venezuela's vast oil reserves, and left numerous disputes over asset seizures and compensation unresolved. This is the reason why Trump mentions that Venezuela is selling stolen oil of USA.

4.2. U.S. Allegations of Drug Smuggling and Narco-Trafficking

One of the most consequential aspects of U.S. policy toward Venezuela has been the framing of the Maduro leadership in terms of narcotics trafficking and “narco-terrorism.” U.S. law enforcement agencies have alleged that senior Venezuelan officials are complicit in facilitating cocaine trafficking routes from South America to North America, particularly through Caribbean corridors.

These allegations serve various functions. Legally, they underpin extradition processes, asset seizures, and international enforcement efforts. Politically, they shift the focus of the Venezuelan crisis from governance and democracy issues to concerns of transnational crime and security. Strategically, they enable the United States to justify extraordinary measures as law enforcement actions instead of military intervention.

Critics argue that this framing risks politicizing international justice and undermining due process. They contend that while drug trafficking is a genuine regional problem, its selective invocation against adversarial regimes reflects broader power dynamics rather than consistent legal principles.

4.3. Trump's Approach to Venezuela

Under President Donald Trump, U.S. policy toward Venezuela adopted a markedly coercive tone. Trump's approach emphasized decisive action, regional dominance, and the strategic importance of oil. Diplomatic patience and multilateral consensus were often subordinated to unilateral enforcement and symbolic demonstrations of power.

Trump's rhetoric framed Venezuela not only as a humanitarian tragedy but as a security threat linked to narcotics and hostile external actors. This framing resonated with domestic political narratives emphasizing border security, law and order, and American strength.

At the same time, Trump's approach was transactional. Signals of de-escalation and engagement emerged when perceived U.S. objectives—such as prisoner releases or energy concessions—were partially met. This oscillation reinforced perceptions of unpredictability in U.S. policy.

4.4 Scenario-Based Analytical Construct: Hypothetical U.S. Military Intervention in Venezuela (January 2026)

This section introduces a hypothetical, scenario-driven analysis created solely for academic purposes. It does not aim to depict a real historical incident. The scenario's goal is to examine the potential geopolitical, legal, and energy-market consequences if a major power were to launch direct military action against the leadership of a sovereign nation, justified by security concerns, counter-narcotics efforts, or international law enforcement.

This analysis explores a hypothetical scenario where, on January 3, 2026, the United States launches a limited but intense military operation targeting Venezuela's political and security leaders. The goals of this operation would be to quickly dismantle command structures, capture key military sites, and forcibly remove current leaders, who are under U.S. legal indictments for narcotics trafficking and organised crime.

The scenario involves deploying special operations forces, intelligence assets, and naval support focused around Caracas and Venezuela's northern coast. Key sites like air bases, ports, and military headquarters are expected to be neutralised quickly to prevent organised resistance and enable swift operational control. This approach is inspired by historical U.S. interventions in Panama (1989) and Iraq (2003), while taking into account Venezuela's unique geopolitical, regional, and legal circumstances.

In this scenario, the abrupt removal of Venezuela's top leaders would create an immediate political vacuum, prompting quick reactions from internal institutions. The Venezuelan government—especially the judiciary, armed forces, and executive branches—would need to establish interim authority amidst intense external influence. This transition would probably face domestic contestation, with opposition supporters, regime loyalists, and security forces responding in divergent ways.

Regionally, the scenario predicts strong diplomatic reactions throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Countries with a long-standing concern for sovereignty and non-intervention would probably denounce the action as a breach of international law, whereas some may cautiously endorse a political shift from authoritarianism. This scenario demonstrates how even a limited intervention could quickly polarise regional positions and intensify ideological splits within the Western Hemisphere.

Economically, the scenario assumes **severe short-term destabilisation** of Venezuela's already fragile economy. Disruptions to oil exports, financial flows, and currency stability would intensify inflationary pressures and exacerbate shortages of essential goods. The uncertainty

surrounding governance and sanctions enforcement would likely discourage immediate investment, despite longer-term expectations of sectoral restructuring.

From an energy-geopolitical view, this scenario underscores the importance of oil in influencing intervention motives and results afterwards. Key leverage points would include control of maritime routes, export terminals, and production sites. International oil markets might face short-term fluctuations, especially if Venezuelan oil supplies were interrupted or selectively brought back under new rules shaped by external players.

This scenario prompts important questions about international law and sovereignty. Using force without clear approval from the United Nations Security Council would violate the UN Charter's ban on intervention and the principle of non-interference. Describing such actions as law enforcement or counter-narcotics measures, rather than warfare, highlights a growing grey area in international practice, where legal justifications are often selectively used to legitimise coercive actions.

The scenario functions as an analytical tool to examine how persistent dependence on unilateral enforcement methods could weaken the core principles of global governance. Smaller states, especially, might see sovereignty as more conditional, based on political alignment, resource availability, or strategic location rather than on universally accepted legal standards.

The value of this scenario lies not in its factual occurrence but in its **analytical utility**. It enables examination of how a direct intervention in Venezuela would reshape hemispheric power dynamics, influence global energy governance, strain multilateral institutions, and reinforce trends toward unilateralism in international relations. By treating the January 2026 episode as a constructed scenario, the paper avoids empirical claims while offering a structured framework for understanding the broader consequences of coercive intervention in a multipolar world.

5. Analysing the Research Questions

5.1. How do recent U.S. actions toward Venezuela reflect broader strategic objectives aimed at consolidating economic, military, and maritime influence across the Western Hemisphere, including the Caribbean and Atlantic sea lanes?

The United States possesses the largest defence budget globally, surpassing USD 850 billion annually. It accounts for approximately 35–40% of global defence spending, underscoring its aim of sustaining a technological edge and global influence. This budget funds an extensive overseas military presence, comprising approximately 750–800 bases and facilities, and the deployment of approximately 170,000–180,000 active-duty troops in Europe, the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East, and key maritime regions. Such significant financial resources and global military distribution enable the U.S. to conduct multiple theatre operations simultaneously, uphold navigational freedom, deter adversaries, and swiftly address crises worldwide.

Recent U.S. actions toward Venezuela highlight a strategic effort to strengthen American economic, military, and maritime dominance throughout the Western Hemisphere, including North America, Central America, South America, Caribbean nations, and the adjacent Atlantic Ocean. This signals a renewed assertion of power in a region historically shaped by U.S. primacy. The January 3, 2026, military operation—Operation Absolute Resolve—followed prolonged pressure, naval blockades, and sanctions aimed at isolating the Maduro regime and limiting its alleged narcotics trafficking and authoritarian control. More than just law enforcement, the operation serves as a broader message of U.S. intent to influence regional dynamics and deter external actors like China and Russia. The strikes and diplomatic moves reflect a renewed focus on U.S. dominance in its neighbourhood, aligning with a modern vision of hemispheric leadership aimed at preventing foreign powers from establishing footholds that could threaten U.S. strategic interests. This includes protecting maritime access routes in the Caribbean and Atlantic, where naval presence and interdiction are now directly linked to counter-narcotics and sanctions enforcement. Overall, U.S. policy toward Venezuela is part of a broader strategy to maintain regional stability and influence, consistent with national priorities.

From a **neorealist perspective**, U.S. actions in Venezuela reflect classic balance-of-power logic aimed at denying rival powers strategic footholds in proximate regions. Control of the Caribbean and Atlantic sea lanes aligns with Mahanian sea-power theory, in which maritime dominance underpins economic and military primacy.

5.2. What role do energy considerations play in U.S. policy toward Venezuela—specifically, how do sanctions, military actions, and control over oil flows relate to U.S. interests as both a major hydrocarbon producer and exporter?

Energy considerations have historically played a key role in U.S. policy toward Venezuela, influencing sanctions, enforcement actions, and diplomatic strategies. Trump repeatedly claimed that Venezuela is selling stolen U.S. oil, referring to the fact that U.S. companies, which invested heavily after oil was discovered in Venezuela in 1935, faced arbitrary taxes and were eventually expelled by leftist governments. Venezuela holds some of the world's largest proven oil reserves. Although production declined significantly before 2026 due to mismanagement and sanctions, its hydrocarbon resources remained geopolitically important for global markets and U.S. energy interests. Washington's sanctions historically banned most Venezuelan crude imports, limited access to financing and technology for upstream projects, and led to reduced output and narrowed export options.

Energy geopolitics scholarship emphasises that control over hydrocarbons extends beyond supply and demand to include sanctions, logistics, and financial enforcement. U.S. actions toward Venezuela align with a realist understanding of energy as strategic power rather than a neutral market good.

In the months around the January 2026 intervention, U.S. energy policy toward Venezuela followed a two-part strategy: enforcement and eventual economic integration. Before the military operation, U.S. authorities seized or intercepted several tankers suspected of carrying sanctioned Venezuelan oil—an effort that was presented as targeting illegal trade and narco-terrorism

funding but also showed Washington's willingness to control maritime flows. After the capture of President Nicolás Maduro, U.S. sanctions were partly relaxed: the Treasury issued general licenses to support oil exploration, production, and exports by U.S. companies and trading firms, and new hydrocarbons laws in Caracas opened the sector to foreign investment under U.S. oversight.

This change indicates that U.S. interests extend beyond simply blocking Venezuela's oil exports. It also involves reintegrating Venezuelan hydrocarbons into global markets with U.S. institutional influence, enhancing domestic energy security, supporting U.S. technological and service providers, and disrupting hostile networks that previously used Venezuelan oil to avoid sanctions—similar to the U.S. approach toward Iran, where sanctions and interdictions are used to limit Tehran's oil revenues and global influence. These policies support broader U.S. aims to stabilize energy markets globally while maintaining control over vital hydrocarbon supplies. This strategy helps strengthen U.S. strategic influence in the Western Hemisphere and beyond. There is another viewpoint that the US is more interested in blocking most of the oil exports from Venezuela and not interested in investing in drilling and refining in Venezuela because it is giving preference to its own oil and gas exports, which are much more profitable in the current energy geopolitics

5.3. Should Russia end the Russia-Ukraine war to strengthen its global role in light of multipolarity?

From a multipolar perspective, there is a strong strategic case for Russia to end the Russia–Ukraine war to consolidate and strengthen its global role. Prolonged conflict has constrained Russia's military, economic, and diplomatic capacity, limiting its ability to project influence across multiple theatres simultaneously. Instead of acting as a flexible pole in a multipolar system—engaging actively in West Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Arctic, and the Indo-Pacific—Russia remains heavily constrained by sanctions, battlefield attrition, and political isolation in parts of the Global North. An end to the war would allow Moscow to redirect resources toward economic stabilisation, technological resilience, and diversified partnerships with Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where multipolar alignments are actively emerging. It would also strengthen Russia's credibility as a responsible great power advocating a rules-based but non-Western international order, rather than being perceived primarily through the lens of a regional military conflict. In a multipolar world, influence derives not only from military power but also from economic connectivity, diplomatic agility, and the ability to shape global agendas on energy, security, and development. By concluding the conflict on terms that preserve core interests while reducing confrontation, Russia would be better positioned to compete with the United States and China as an autonomous pole, rather than remaining locked in a draining confrontation that limits its long-term strategic options.

In debates on multipolarity, power is increasingly understood as multidimensional—combining military capability with economic connectivity and diplomatic legitimacy. Prolonged high-intensity conflict risks weakening a state's capacity to project influence across multiple theatres, a key requirement for sustained pole status in a fragmented global system.

5.4. What implications does the normalization of such unilateral actions have for smaller states' sovereignty and the credibility of multilateral institutions, including the United Nations Security Council?

The acceptance of unilateral military actions by major powers—like the recent U.S. intervention in Venezuela—significantly affects the sovereignty of smaller states and the trustworthiness of multilateral bodies, especially the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). For smaller and middle powers, sovereignty has traditionally been protected not only by their material strength but also by following international norms that bar the use of force except in self-defence or with explicit UNSC approval. When powerful countries bypass these norms and justify interventions using unilateral legal, security, or law-enforcement reasons, they weaken the normative protections that small states depend on to resist coercion.

Such precedents heighten the risk for weaker states to face selective interventions, particularly if they hold strategic resources, are located in key geostrategic areas, or have contested political legitimacy. The Venezuelan example suggests that sovereignty might become more conditional—respected when it serves great-power interests but disregarded when it conflicts with them. This fosters an environment of uncertainty, prompting smaller states to seek security guarantees from external actors, increase militarization, or align with rival blocs, which could intensify global polarization instead of promoting stability.

For multilateral institutions, the consequences are equally serious. The UNSC's inability to prevent, authorize, or respond effectively to unilateral interventions highlights structural paralysis caused by veto politics and great-power rivalry. Consequently, the Council risks being seen less as a protector of collective security and more as a stage for post-facto justifications and diplomatic signals. This loss of authority damages trust in rules-based global governance and encourages states to pursue self-help strategies outside institutional frameworks.

Over time, the acceptance of unilateral actions risks eroding international law by replacing consensus-based norms with enforcement driven by power. This signals a move from institutional multilateralism to a fragmented global order ruled by strategic coercion, which tends to harm smaller states more and undermines global stability. The intervention challenges **Westphalian sovereignty**, replacing it with a conditional sovereignty model in which legitimacy is externally adjudicated. This trend aligns with scholarship on selective enforcement and post-liberal interventionism.

6. Conclusion

From India's Perspective: India views the U.S. action in Venezuela as strategically important but with unique implications. Although India's direct trade and oil imports from Venezuela had already declined significantly prior to 2026 due to long-standing sanctions and logistical disengagement, its broader strategic stance of supporting multilateralism, sovereignty, and peaceful dispute resolution keeps New Delhi cautious diplomatically. The Indian government publicly raised concerns about the conflict, emphasizing dialogue and adherence to international

law, while political parties and civil society opposed unilateral military actions that violate the UN Charter and established norms. The crisis also underscores India's energy diversification efforts, which have reduced dependence on Venezuelan crude in recent years but could create future opportunities if a stable, sanctions-compliant export framework develops. Furthermore, Indian state companies such as ONGC Videsh have longstanding upstream interests in Venezuelan oil assets that have been hindered by sanctions and instability; a U.S.-led restructuring of the Venezuelan energy sector could facilitate investment recovery and dividend payments within a complex geopolitical context. Most importantly, the Venezuela episode emphasizes India's commitment to strategic autonomy—balancing relations with major powers while supporting a rules-based international order. India's response will aim to maintain stable energy relations, uphold international law, and navigate great-power rivalry without overt alignment, providing an India-specific perspective on how unilateral military actions by major powers impact the Global South and influence their foreign policy choices.

Recent U.S. actions on Venezuela represent a decisive moment in hemispheric and global politics. They reflect the convergence of security concerns, energy geopolitics, and ideological contestation within a broader shift toward unilateralism in international affairs. While framed as law enforcement and democratic accountability, these actions have profound implications for sovereignty, international law, and global order.

Venezuela's future remains uncertain. Political transition, economic recovery, and social reconciliation will depend not only on external pressure but on internal institutional reform and inclusive governance. For the international community, the Venezuelan crisis serves as a cautionary example of how unresolved domestic crises can become arenas for great-power competition, reshaping the norms that govern the global system.

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