

## Content Report – After the U.S. Intervention in Venezuela: What to Expect in Latin America?

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### CONTEXT

The recent U.S. military intervention in Venezuela represents a significant inflection point in hemispheric politics and raises profound concerns regarding regional stability, international law, and Latin American political autonomy. Speakers contextualized the operation within the revised U.S. National Security Strategy approved in November 2025, which repositions Latin America and the Caribbean as central to Washington's security priorities and introduces what multiple participants framed as a renewed interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, informally referred to as the "*Trump Corollary*".

This shift reflects a broader strategic recalibration within U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing deterrence, resource security, migration control, and geopolitical competition with China. The intervention, combining precision military strikes and the capture of a sitting head of state, was interpreted as an unprecedented escalation relative to post-Cold War norms in the hemisphere. Although U.S. interventions in Latin America are not historically novel, the combination of kinetic force, decapitation of executive authority, and absence of multilateral mandate was widely seen as marking the opening of a new phase of hemispheric security politics.

Participants emphasized the operational speed, limited resistance, and extensive intelligence preparation as decisive characteristics of the intervention. The episode raised wider questions about the international order amid rising fragmentation, erosion of multilateral norms, and the increasing normalization of transactional power projection.

**U.S. STRATEGY AND THE LOGIC OF HEMISPHERIC POWER**

Discussions converged on the view that the intervention reflects a shift toward a more transactional and unilateral U.S. strategic posture. While the United States possesses overwhelming military superiority, participants questioned the existence of a coherent long-term strategy for post-Maduro Venezuela. The removal of a leader provides the appearance of resolution, but without an institutional roadmap risks producing an authoritarian reconfiguration rather than a democratic transition.

Multiple speakers noted that the new NSS envisions the Western Hemisphere as a strategic buffer critical to energy security, migration control, and supply chain insulation in the context of U.S., China geopolitical rivalry. Under this framing, Venezuela becomes a trial site for demonstrating deterrence, coercive capacity, and hemispheric primacy. Yet such goals may collide with U.S. domestic political constraints, especially during an electoral cycle, and with longstanding structural limits of American power projection in South America. Unlike Central America or the Caribbean, South American states possess diversified economic portfolios, alternative geopolitical partnerships, and higher resilience against overt political tutelage.

Speakers emphasized that the intervention revives the coercive lineage of hemispheric policy associated with the Monroe Doctrine while also diverging from earlier iterations by foregrounding strategic commodities (oil, gas, critical minerals) and technology supply chains. This represents not a return to Cold War containment, but the emergence of a geo-economic form of hemispheric influence focused on transactions, compliance, and deterrence over governance-building or institution-making.

The critical question raised was whether the U.S. intervention seeks stabilization or merely leverage. Without sustained institutional investment, humanitarian assistance, and coordinated transition mechanisms, Venezuela's structural crises, state erosion, security pluralization, criminal fragmentation, and humanitarian breakdown, remain unresolved. Several speakers warned that premature consolidation of power by successor elites, including security and intelligence factions, may undermine democratization prospects and entrench new forms of authoritarian governance.

**REGIONAL RESPONSES, FRAGMENTATION, AND THE CRISIS OF AUTONOMY**

The intervention illuminated the weakening of regional diplomacy and the erosion of Latin America's collective action capacity. The collapse or dormancy of instruments such as UNASUR, CELAC, and related South American coordination platforms reduces the region's ability to shape crisis outcomes or articulate alternative solutions. In the absence of structured consultation

mechanisms, unilateral actions tend to deepen fragmentation and transform localized conflicts into wider systemic instability through migration flows, border militarization, and the expansion of illicit economies.

From a Brazilian perspective, discomfort was shared across the political spectrum. Brazil historically advocates negotiated settlements, regional multilateralism, and the preservation of sovereignty as core tenets of its foreign policy identity. Yet Brazil's ability to mediate the crisis is constrained by the absence of regional consensus, reduced institutional density, and the re-politicization of foreign policy debates in the domestic sphere.

Importantly, the expected immediate anti-U.S. backlash across Latin America did not materialize. Participants argued that this temporary tolerance reflects a regional environment in which security concerns, governance fatigue, and anti-authoritarian sentiment coexist with a pragmatic acceptance of U.S. capabilities. However, this acceptance is fragile: perceptions may shift rapidly if U.S. actions are interpreted as interfering in electoral processes, resource governance, or migration management, especially in the context of the 2026 electoral supercycle.

The intervention also raised deeper questions about autonomy. The crisis exposes a structural dilemma for Latin American states: the region demands autonomy from hegemonic impositions, but lacks the institutional architecture to aggregate power and exercise sovereignty collectively. Without reconstituting regional platforms capable of articulation, Latin America risks moving from a condition of relative autonomy to one of strategic vulnerability.

## **EXTRA-REGIONAL ACTORS AND THE EMERGING GEOPOLITICS OF COMPETITION**

The Venezuelan crisis intersects with broader dynamics of extra-regional competition. China has become a central economic and infrastructural actor in South America, not through military presence but through financing, commodities integration, energy transition supply chains, and technology ecosystems. In contrast to Cold War formulations, China does not articulate formal spheres of influence, yet its deepening presence indirectly constrains U.S. strategic agency.

Speakers argued that the U.S. intervention should be interpreted as part of a resource securitization agenda, in which hydrocarbons, critical minerals, and rare earths are embedded in geopolitical competition. From this perspective, Latin America becomes a strategic theater not because of ideology, but because of commodities, market access, and supply chain redundancy—key drivers of 21st century conflict and cooperation.

# CEBRI

Brazil was characterized as a swing state, not easily absorbed by binary alignments. Its agricultural, energy, technological, and environmental assets give it positional leverage in a fragmented order. Heavy-handed U.S. approaches risk accelerating Asian diversification in Latin America, while purely economic Chinese approaches risk underestimating regional political sensitivities. For the region as a whole, the competition between great powers may generate opportunities for strategic bargaining, but also heightens vulnerability to external shocks and policy volatility.

The Venezuelan case thus functions as a litmus test for how Latin America positions itself within global realignments. Whether the region responds through reassertion of autonomy, passive adaptation, or selective alignment remains an open question.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### For Latin America and Brazil

- Strengthen diplomatic coordination mechanisms capable of addressing elections, migration, and humanitarian flows.
- Reaffirm sovereignty and autonomy principles while avoiding the normalization of unilateral interventions.  
Integrate energy transition, minerals, and technology into long-term strategic planning frameworks.
- Expand diversification strategies to reduce vulnerability to major-power competition.

### For the United States

- Clarify political objectives and time horizons for post-intervention governance.
- Combine coercive measures with institutional and humanitarian engagement to mitigate instability risks.
- Coordinate with regional actors to enhance legitimacy and reduce transaction costs.

### For the International System

- Assess the normative and legal implications of leader capture and extra-mandate interventions.
- Reinforce multilateral conflict management mechanisms to prevent further erosion of international legality.