

Trump vs. Maduro: How close is the Western hemisphere to war?



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Trump says 'days numbered' for Venezuela's Maduro

The US president sent mixed signals over his plans for Venezuela as his military build-up in the Caribbean continues.

3 Nov 2025

BBC

Trump says he doubts US will go to war with Venezuela

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Aoife Walsh, Washington and George Wright



Watch: Trump doubts the US will go to war with Venezuela

Venezuela declares Trinidad and Tobago's prime minister persona non grata

Tensions have grown between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago over support for US military action in the Caribbean.



The US Navy destroyer USS Gravelly approaches the Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago [Andrea De Silva/Reuters]

By Abby Rogers, AFP and Reuters

28 Oct 2025

Venezuela

From Wealth to Collapse



1970s–1980s: The Oil Boom

- Venezuela was the richest country in Latin America, floating on oil
- Caracas turned modern nicknamed “Saudi Venezuela.”
- Behind the luxury, corruption spread and the country became fully oil-dependent



1980s–1990s: The Crash

- Oil prices collapsed → economic crisis, massive debt, social inequality.
- 1989: The “Caracazo” deadly riots after IMF austerity reforms.
- From this chaos emerged a new figure: Hugo Chávez.



1999–2013: The Chávez Era

- Promised to empower “the people”
- Nationalizations, social aid, and control over institutions.
- Oil boom: popularity surge, but corruption, censorship, and authoritarianism grew beneath.

Venezuela

Maduro and the actual crisis



2013–2015: The Turning Point

- Chávez dies → Nicolás Maduro takes over.
- In 2014, oil prices crash → hyperinflation, economic collapse.



2015–2020: The Political Breakdown

- Rigged elections, crushed opposition, repression.
- Maduro creates a parallel assembly, silences the media, and consolidates power
- Democracy collapses



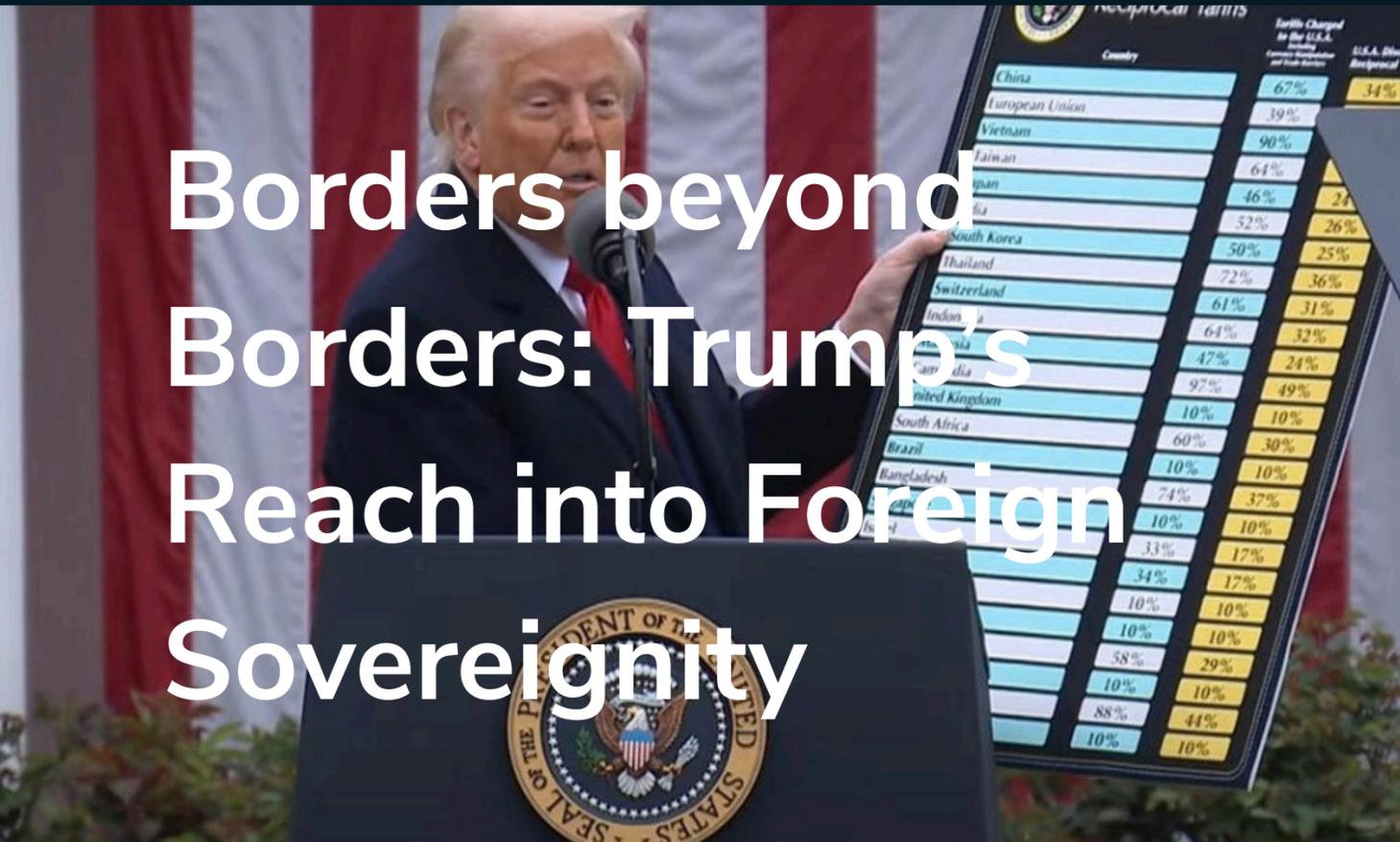
2020–2025: Survival Through Corruption

- Over 7 million Venezuelans fled the country
- Regime survives through drug trafficking, illegal gold mining, and foreign allies (Russia, China, Iran).
- The U.S. responds with sanctions and CIA operations in the Caribbean.

Borders beyond Borders: Trump's Reach into Foreign Sovereignty

Is really the continuity between Trump's and Biden administration without coherence?

national interest vs collective stability



The chart, titled 'Reciprocal Tariffs', compares the tariff rates charged by the U.S. to other countries with the reciprocal rates charged by those countries to the U.S. The chart is divided into two columns: 'Tariffs Charged in the U.S.A.' and 'U.S.A. Tariff Reciprocal'. The countries listed include China, European Union, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan, India, South Korea, Thailand, Switzerland, Jordan, Indonesia, Cambodia, United Kingdom, South Africa, Brazil, and Bangladesh. The U.S. tariff rates are generally higher than the reciprocal rates.

Country	Tariffs Charged in the U.S.A.	U.S.A. Tariff Reciprocal
China	67%	34%
European Union	39%	
Vietnam	90%	
Taiwan	64%	
Japan	46%	24%
India	52%	26%
South Korea	50%	25%
Thailand	72%	36%
Switzerland	61%	31%
Jordan	64%	32%
Indonesia	47%	24%
Cambodia	92%	49%
United Kingdom	10%	10%
South Africa	60%	30%
Brazil	10%	10%
Bangladesh	74%	37%
	10%	10%
	33%	17%
	34%	17%
	10%	10%
	10%	10%
	58%	29%
	10%	10%
	88%	44%
	10%	10%

First term (2017-2021)

- “America First” doctrine
- He withdrew from Paris Climate Change Agreement, the Iran nuclear deal and UNESCO

Second term (2024 until now)

- After his re-election, his agenda went further, as well as his menacing communicative strategy
- Unpredictability
- EU relations weakened? Criticism of Nato
- Complicated relationships with Asia (especially North Korea and China)

Trump's main objective? It's about perception. His leadership challenges the norms of diplomacy and redefines sovereignty



It's about reshaping the regional balance of power and removing a long-standing adversary.

Trump and Venezuela - Why Venezuela?

Tensions between the U.S. and Venezuela have escalated sharply under President Trump, with military actions, covert operations, and growing talk of regime change.

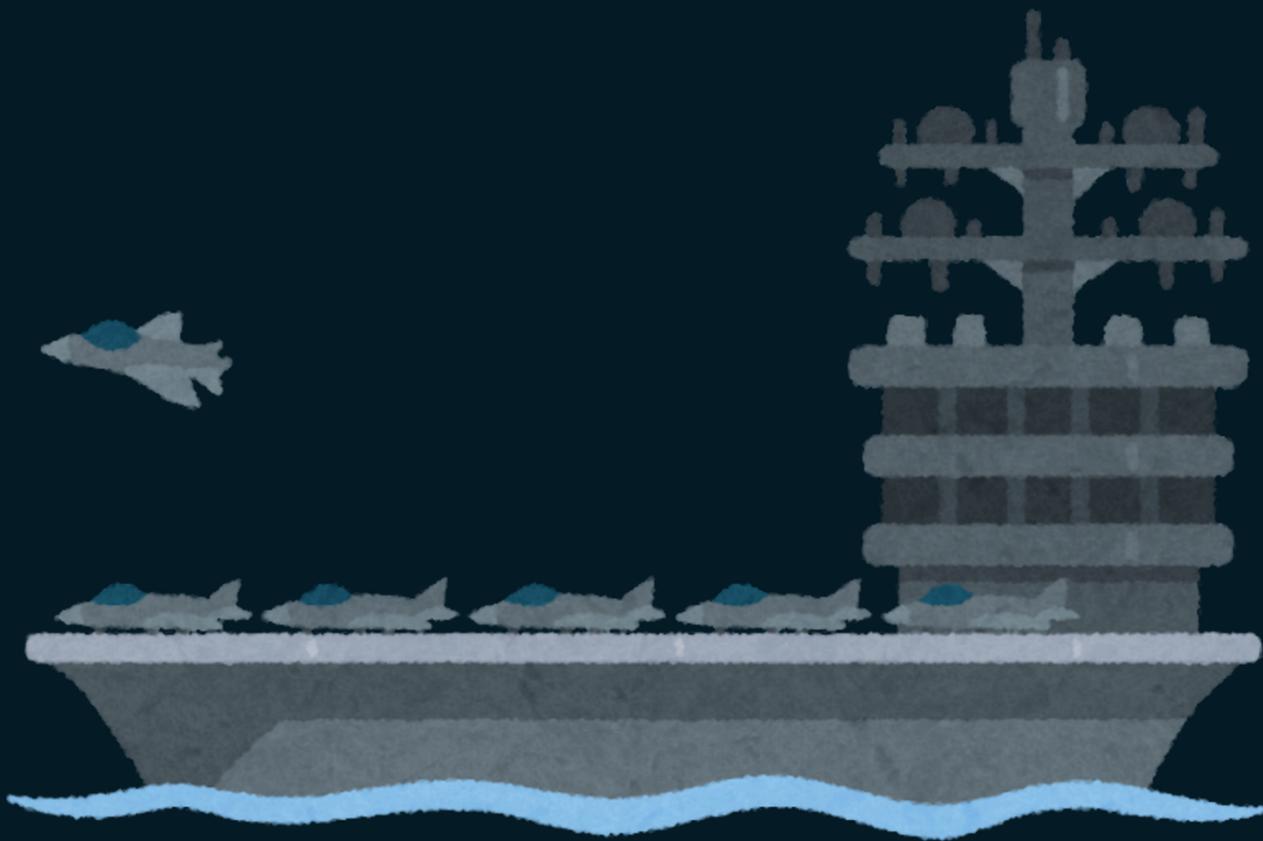
The US foreign policy shift favours an authoritarian stance and the end of cooperation.

But WHY VENEZUELA?

- **Regime pressure:** Trump aims to remove President Maduro, including covert CIA operations and military strikes on Venezuelan-linked vessels
- **Anti-drug justification:** these strikes are framed as targeting drug cartels like *Tren de Aragua**, that smuggles narcotics into the US (even though critics argue this is a cover for broader political aims).
- **Global power:** by targeting Venezuela, Trump aims to reassert US dominance in the Western Hemisphere, especially as international tensions rise in regions like the Middle East and East Asia.

**Tren de Aragua* is a transnational criminal organization from Venezuela.

Potential Outcomes:



- With Trump's increasing shift towards a more antagonistic diplomatic attitude, the risk of increasing tension and instability rises.
- This is seen in the threats towards not only Venezuela but also recently Nigeria, and others, such as Canada, in the past.
- The recent removal of transparency for the US Congress and the world, done by the Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, also underpins Trump's drastic shift in domestic and foreign policy.

- For the foreseeable future, we expect to see escalations rise as more and more alleged narcotic boats are targeted, as well as potential CIA false flag operations are planned, as have been seen so far.
- Recently, it was reported that the Trump administration has already outlined land targets in Venezuela, which would increase tensions and the risk for conflict.
- Aside from this, another increase in bilateral sanctions, which were already put in place in Trump's first term, could also be expanded as tensions rise.

The US's shift in its governing philosophy, especially in its foreign policy and diplomacy, where even allies are put under pressure to forward, the Trump administrations agenda, destroys the normal world order and US global collaboration, creating tension and risk worldwide.

The current stalemate between Venezuela and the US leaves the Caribbean region in a fraught situation. The increasing tensions in the Americas due to Trump and other actors pose an immense risk to the future of these areas, particularly the region regarding Venezuela and its neighbors.

Will actors within Venezuela take action and depose Maduro or will this tension build to the point of a larger conflict, and if the regime change happens what does that say about the criticisms of US interventionism in the Americas and abroad.



Is this truly a war on narcotics, or is it an excuse for regime change in Venezuela?

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Thank you!

Are there any questions?

