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Maduro arrest: expect a huge impact on geopolitics

Steve Bakke  January 22, 2025

The illustration on the right was published in 2007 by Carlos Latuff. It depicts Uncle Sam seated in the Oval Office, speaking on the phone, with a list of countries the U.S. had previously invaded displayed on the desk. It's now 19 years later, and this political cartoon has regained relevance. Time passes, but many things remain the same.



On January 3, President Trump announced U.S. forces had completed a precision strike to arrest Nicolas Maduro, the indicted and illegitimate Venezuelan leader. He recently lost an election to the opposition leader, but refused to relinquish the presidency.

Trump's political opponents question his authority to carry out this action without Congressional approval. However, recall a similar action was successfully tested in a U.S. court after dictator Manuel Noriega's arrest following America's 1989 Panama invasion.

Furthermore, every recent president has unilaterally carried out military actions without congressional action. Recall Obama's 2016 dropping of over 26,000 bombs on 7 countries without approval. The Venezuela action was not a war, and won't be an occupation.

Considering past statements by democrat politicians, perhaps many secretly support Maduro's arrest. In 2019 Sen. Chris Murphy, complained: "If Trump cared about consistency, he would make the realist case for intervention in Venezuela – getting rid of Maduro is good for the United States..." Recently, he stated: "Venezuela is not a security threat to the U.S."

In 2019, Kamela Harris announced: "What's happening in Venezuela is a crisis....America must show moral leadership in this hemisphere." Compare that to this recent comment: "Donald Trump's actions in Venezuela do not make America safer...."

In 2020 Sen. Chuck Schymer, D-NY, criticized Trump for not getting rid of Maduro: "....And the president brags about his Venezuela policy? Give us a break, he hasn't brought an end to the Maduro regime...." Early this month, the Senator told George Stphanopoulos on ABC: Maduro is a horrible, horrible person, but you don't treat lawlessness with other lawlessness...."



Here's Senator Biden commenting in 1989: "Let's go after the drug lords where they live....there must be no safe haven...." In 2020, candidate Biden tweeted: "Trump talks

tough....but admires thugs and dictators....As President, I will stand with the Venezuelan people....” His party has flip-flopped and now disagrees.

Some describe Trump’s style as “Jacksonian” i.e. “no better friend, no worse enemy” or “don’t tread on me” as offered by Victor Davis Hanson. True to these descriptions, Trump found relevance and value in the 200-year-old “Monroe Doctrine.” President James Monroe formulated it in 1823, and it’s been invoked by Presidents Grant, Teddy Roosevelt, Kennedy, Reagan, and now Trump.

This Doctrine recommends foreign policies that prevent significant expansion of foreign influence or colonization in this hemisphere. The relevant Venezuelan concerns are the ceding of influence to China and Russia regarding security, political and economic affairs, in addition to Venezuela’s illicit drug traffic into the U.S. and elsewhere.

Maduro has been an indicted “narco-terrorist” subject to a U.S. bounty since 2020. President Biden raised it to \$25,000,000. President Trump increased it to \$50,000,000 and acted on that indictment.



China and Russia had troops in Venezuela assisting with various matters, thereby establishing a threatening foothold very near America. This represents what the “Monroe Doctrine” is intended to prevent. And one must also acknowledge the strategic importance of Venezuela’s petroleum reserves, the highest in the world. Two unfriendly countries, China and Cuba, both rely heavily on Venezuelan oil.

Some pundits speculate that our success in Venezuela, and our “territorial security” priorities, portend a “new world order.” America’s action should give pause to countries such as Russia, China, Iran, Columbia, and Cuba while they plan their future. Some are left in energy and economic limbo. The Greenland negotiation is also an important issue, with Russia and China both coveting Greenland’s strategic location and vast natural resources.

In any case, if successful, the events in Venezuela will be transformational for the hemisphere. A huge challenge will be to stabilize governance in the country. This action doesn’t signal an American appetite for conquest. Rather, it should send signals to China and Russia that America will take decisive action to protect American interests, and the interests of allies, and those countries should “tread softly.”

Should we be expecting global geopolitical shifts of an epic nature? Will there be a shift to stronger global territorial politics whereby international powers more aggressively stake out their sphere of economic and military influence? Would these changes affect how the Ukraine/Russia war and the Taiwan/China situation are resolved? All are possibilities.

Let’s hope we see a more peaceful world!