

Donroe Doctrine vs Monroe Doctrine: A question of legitimatizing intervention?

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Abstract

Trump administration has evoked the same doctrine several times in the past few months to interfere in the Venezuelan affairs under the garb of anti-drug trafficking operations. The doctrine has however shifted its focus from Europe to China and Russia. Some scholars are now calling this the Trump Corollary to the 19th century Monroe Doctrine.

The Donroe doctrine, as President Trump called it, cannot be considered in the same lines as the Roosevelt corollary. Trump's main intention behind the Venezuelan escapade seems to be furthering the business interests of the oil tycoons of the United States and to make sure Chinese and Russian businesses do not get a foothold in this oil rich country.

Key words- Monroe Doctrine, Donroe doctrine, Venezuela, Roosevelt corollary, Donald Trump, Maduro, narco- terrorism

Monroe Doctrine: After the invasion and arrest of Venezuelan President Maduro on January 5, 2026, the US President Trump in his address to the nation mentioned that he was re-emphasising the Monroe doctrine and that this particular instance may be called as “Donroe Doctrine” or Donald Trump’s interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. President Trump was referring to the policy announced by the 5th US President James Monroe in 1823, while referring to the colonies in Latin America. Monroe’s main intention then was to keep the European conflicts out of entering in the Western Hemisphere. He promised not to meddle into the politics of the colonies and expected the European nations to stop any future colonization and supporting wars against the United States. However, US power to implement the same was

very limited at the time. Theodore Roosevelt had also invoked the same doctrine in 1904-5 in order to give more teeth to the doctrine by making the US as the policeman of the Western Hemisphere. The United States would not hesitate to intervene in the affairs of the Latin American states to make sure to contain instability and to ensure foreign debts were paid without the interference from the former colonial powers.

After Donald Trump's intervention in Venezuela by arresting its President Maduro and his wife, the observers are drawing parallels with Theodore Roosevelt's Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine and linking it to the 1903 Venezuela crisis. But both the events are very different and we cannot contextualize in one glance. It is important to mention that in 1903, Germany and England threatened to invade Venezuela to recoup unpaid debts. The Venezuela Crisis of 1902-03 saw a naval blockade of several months imposed against Venezuela by Britain, Germany and Italy because of President Cipriano Castro's refusal to pay foreign debts. This incident was a major driver of the Roosevelt Corollary and the subsequent U.S. Big Stick policy and Dollar Diplomacy in Latin America.

Importantly, since 2016, Venezuela has been in crisis due to hyperinflation, collapse of oil production, massive food and medicine shortage, emigration of over 7 million people and political instability. The recent invasion and arrest of Venezuelan President Maduro on January 5, 2026 by the United States, 2026, had erupted with the political crisis and a division within the country's political structure. There have been attempts to overthrow President Nicolas Maduro previously as well on account of widespread corruption. Several analyses have argued that this is due to Venezuela's oil assets. As noted by Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso, oil is "the devil's" excrement which leads to instability and war- where there is oil, this is not a new phenomenon.

Trump administration has evoked the same doctrine several times in the past few months to interfere in the Venezuelan affairs under the garb of anti-drug trafficking operations. The doctrine has however shifted its focus from Europe to China and Russia. Some scholars are now calling this the Trump Corollary to the 19th century Monroe Doctrine.

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furthering the business interests of the oil tycoons of the United States and to make sure Chinese and Russian businesses do not get a foothold in this oil rich country.

Venezuela's relations with China and Russia have been strong since Hugo Chavez's time. They have developed strategic partnerships based on oil, mining, finances and defence aid. Both countries have invested heavily in oil industries and have been providing loans to Venezuela in the last few years. Venezuela owes about \$10-12 billion to China and \$3 -5 Billion to Russia. Both countries have been partners with Venezuela to challenge the dollar dominance and have sided with Chavez in the past to stand up to the United States strategically and politically. The recent trend in doing away with dollar in bilateral trading has been a test to the United States and President Trump has mentioned several times about punishing those who try de-dollarize the international trade. Chinese oil companies have a lot to lose if US takes over the oil industry in Venezuela. Russia's hope of bypassing US sanctions with its long-term ally might be jeopardized with the US backed regime ruling Venezuela. Whether President Trump's actions in Venezuela are legal or not or how far they would benefit the United States, Trump has made his intentions clear: He is leaving a mark on history with his 'Doctrine'.

Does Trump have a doctrine? - A doctrine in foreign policy is a declared set of principles or policy statements in the conduct of foreign relations. Donroe Doctrine as Trump called has neither. The term Donroe doctrine was coined by the New York Post in 2025, while describing Trump's plans for Greenland and Panama Canal. The Trump administration has reiterated the same phrase now through this action in Venezuela.

The initial action taken against Venezuela was about drug trafficking, which President Trump defended as extraterritorial enforcement of US laws against narco-terrorism. However, after the arrest of Nicolas Maduro, Trump announced that the US will 'run' the country until such time as it is able to manage itself and that US can transfer the control, and that the US businesses would invest and build the oil infrastructure in Venezuela. This is not a principle or a policy. This is a hostile takeover of oil business. The only principle that this doctrine may satisfy is the promotion and protection of American commercial interests in Latin America. There is no pretence of helping Venezuela become a democratic country or protecting the rights of citizens there. Earlier doctrines by other Presidents (Truman doctrine, Monroe doctrine) or prime ministers (for example Indian Prime Minister I.K.Gujral doctrine), have guided the countries

for a long time in protecting the national interests within the global norms. Can the same be expected out of Trump's approach? This approach defies domestic constitutionalism, international law, democratic norms and multilateralism. It screams of 'might is right approach' and at worst, hooliganism.

Trump administration's 'America first' policy is the corner stone of his foreign policy that makes it nationalist, transactional, unilateral and isolationist. This is a huge departure from the earlier policy other presidents had followed. The United States had earlier prioritized multilateralism, alliances, democratic rule, and a liberal order. All these have been thrown out of the window for an inward looking, self-aggrandizing Trumpism, which cannot guide United States in the coming years as future presidents will be cleaning up the disorder created by this administration.

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