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The US and Latin America: A New Hemispheric Security?

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FROM THE EDITORS

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In the early morning of January 3, 2026, US forces carried out a military operation in Venezuela that culminated in the capture of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. Planned for months and preceded by bombings in different parts of the country, the action was justified by the United States government based on the indictment of both by the New York Justice Department. According to US authorities, Maduro is accused of conspiracy to commit narcoterrorism, conspiracy to import cocaine, possession of machine guns and explosive devices, and conspiracy to use these weapons against the United States (Gavras et al. 2026).

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country. The context also differs from previous interventions. The action occurred at a time of strong domestic weariness with the interventionist policy of US power, still marked by the failure in Afghanistan and the legacy of the Iraq War (Winter 2026).

The significance of the operation became more evident in light of the speech that followed. In a statement after Maduro's capture, Donald Trump reiterated the association between the Venezuelan government, drug trafficking, and the "murderous gangs" that, according to him, threaten communities in the United States, further stating that "American dominance in the Western Hemisphere will never be questioned again" (Trump 2026). On the same occasion, he explicitly linked American interests in Venezuela to the exploration, production, and outflow of oil, demonstrating that the intervention was part of a broader agenda of asserting power and protecting the United States' strategic interests in the region.

[T]he intervention in Venezuela can be interpreted as the most forceful expression of the Trump Corollary, a contemporary reformulation of the Monroe Doctrine that guides the current National Security Strategy of the United States.

Interestingly, between 1902 and 1903, the United States acted to contain a military action carried out by the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy–in response to Venezuela's non-payment of a debt–and thus ended the naval blockade imposed on the country. This episode would later contribute to the formulation of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine and to the consolidation of the American claim to exercise a role as "international police" in the hemisphere.

From this perspective, the intervention in Venezuela can be interpreted as the most forceful expression of the Trump Corollary, a contemporary reformulation of the Monroe Doctrine that guides the current National Security Strategy of the United States. While the Monroe Doctrine was consolidated around the exclusion of extra-regional powers and the preservation of the American sphere of influence on the continent (Bethell 2025), the Trump Corollary reconfigures this tradition to respond to the geopolitical disputes of the 21st century, especially in the face of China's economic rise.

Added to this are issues such as immigration and organized crime, historically situated outside the military sphere, but now incorporated into the national security agenda. This convergence expands the militarization of issues previously addressed

through diplomatic and cooperation mechanisms, maintaining the United States' claim to primacy in the region while redefining the priorities and mechanisms through which it is exercised (Ernst 2025). From this perspective, the Trump Corollary suggests a shift from a hegemonic logic–albeit a profoundly asymmetrical one–to a logic of domination, re-establishing the use of force as a structuring element of inter-American relations and reopening the debate on the foundations of hemispheric security (Tokatlian 2025).

The upcoming Latin American elections, the growing competition between the United States and China, and the weakening of traditional mechanisms for regional coordination make this debate [on hemispheric security] even more relevant and challenging, especially regarding effective mechanisms for a new hemispheric security configuration, particularly those based on cooperation.

As Milani (2018) demonstrates, the hemispheric security architecture in the Americas underwent a profound transformation after the end of the Cold War. Under United States leadership, the regional agenda was progressively reformulated through the Organization of American States (OAS), expanding its scope to incorporate threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, natural disasters, and, subsequently, cybersecurity. The 2003 Declaration on Security in the Americas consolidated this multidimensional conception, shifting the debate from strictly military defense to issues of governance, development, cooperation, and the protection of populations.

This redefinition of the agenda, however, was accompanied by disputes over its political and institutional implementation. Throughout the 2000s, South American countries–notably Brazil–sought to strengthen their own mechanisms for coordination and cooperation in defense, culminating in the creation of the South American Defense Council within the framework of UNASUR. These initiatives did not intend to replace the existing hemispheric architecture, but to expand regional autonomy, differentiate defense from internal security, and balance US influence in defining security priorities (Milani 2018). The consolidation of the Trump Corollary strains this historical trajectory by unilaterally reaffirming the centrality of the United States in defining the threats, priorities, and instruments of hemispheric security, thus calling into question the foundations upon which the regional security architecture has been built in recent decades.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that what is at stake is not only the configuration of forces over who determines the parameters of hemispheric security, but the very nature of the security sought. In Latin America, this dispute is significant, given the different reactions to Maduro's capture, where some leaders vehemently condemned the act (such as President Lula in Brazil and Gustavo Petro in Colombia). In contrast, others celebrated the supposed end of the Venezuelan dictatorship (such as Javier Milei in Argentina and Daniel Noboa in Ecuador).

This raises an important question: how to redefine the contours of hemispheric security in a transforming and extremely polarized international environment? The upcoming Latin American elections, the growing competition between the United States and China, and the weakening of traditional mechanisms for regional coordination make this debate even more relevant and challenging, especially regarding effective mechanisms for a new hemispheric security configuration, particularly those based on cooperation.

The reflections gathered in this issue of CEBRI-Journal engage precisely with these dilemmas. The articles explore, from different perspectives, the ongoing transformations in the hemispheric order, examining everything from the historical construction of the idea of Latin America and the challenges of defining the region's political and strategic contours to the tensions between autonomy, external influence, and new forms of geopolitical competition. This issue also addresses how the broadening of the concept of security–which today incorporates dimensions such as cybersecurity, organized crime, disputes over strategic resources, and institutional vulnerabilities–coexists with the return of practices of coercion, intervention, and the assertion of zones of influence.

[T]he discussion about a new hemispheric security is not limited to identifying threats, but involves a broader dispute about who defines these threats, which instruments are considered legitimate to confront them, and which forms of regional governance can respond to the challenges of a more fragmented and competitive world.

Taken together, the contributions reveal that the discussion about a new hemispheric security is not limited to identifying threats, but involves a broader dispute about who defines these threats, which instruments are considered legitimate to confront them, and which forms of regional governance can respond to the challenges of a more fragmented and

competitive world. By examining the transformations in the role of the United States, the effects of the intervention in Venezuela, the strategies of other global actors, and the possibilities for cooperation in a multipolar context, this number invites reflection on possible paths to a new configuration of hemispheric security in the region.

This issue also inaugurates a new phase for CEBRI-Journal**.** Alongside the Special Section, we are restructuring our editorial framework. The Academic Articles and Policy Papers sections will now be combined into a single section, Policy Analysis. This change institutionalizes a characteristic that already marks the journal's publications: texts that combine analytical rigor, dialogue with specialized literature, and reflection focused on the challenges of international politics. We hope this strengthens a space for debate capable of bringing together research, policy formulation, and analysis of the transformations shaping the contemporary international agenda.

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Enjoy your reading!

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