The Donroe Doctrine: A New Era for Cuba?

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The Donroe Doctrine and Cuba: Implications of a renewed U.S. Policy

The U.S. capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in January 2026 marks a significant escalation in Washington's approach to foreign policy. The U.S. operated a major naval blockade and military operation in Venezuela, resulting in Maduro's capture and President Trump publicly declaring that the U.S. would at least temporarily "run" Venezuela during the transitional period. Against this backdrop of heightened U.S. military

and political engagement in the region, discussions about the revival of the Monroe Doctrine have sparked, calling Trump's actions the **"Donroe Doctrine."** Cuba has rapidly emerged as another potential test case of this doctrine, with significant implications for regional stability, great-power competition, and European economic and security interests.

The Emergence of the "Donroe Doctrine"

Against the backdrop of the operations in Venezuela, analysts and commentators have revived discussions about the Monroe Doctrine under a new label, the **"Donroe Doctrine."** The term "Donroe Doctrine" is a composition of the term Monroe Doctrine and Donald Trump's name. It is an allusion to Donald Trump's new geopolitical ambitions. The original Monroe Doctrine, articulated in 1823 by President James Monroe, opposed European intervention in the Western Hemisphere and became a central pillar of the U.S. grand strategy over time. Historically, this doctrine has been used both as a shield for emerging republics and a sword for American regional interests, reflecting a complex legacy of paternalism and protection.

The "Donroe Doctrine" refers to the second Trump administration's apparent willingness to enforce U.S. predominance in the Western Hemisphere through direct control over territory, resources, and political outcomes, while excluding external influence from rivals such as China and Russia. Unlike Cold War containment strategies, this approach appears to be less focused on ideological competition and more focused on resource control. This shift signifies a "transactional" turn in hemispheric relations, where the security of the region is no longer managed through multilateral organisations but through direct bilateral pressure. Consequently, the doctrine implies that national sovereignty is conditional upon alignment with Washington's strategic and economic priorities in the Americas.

Cuba as a Test Case

Following the events in Venezuela, other countries in Latin America are worried they might become subject to similar pressure. This became particularly evident on 11 January, when Trump warned Cuba that "no more Venezuelan oil or money" would go to Havana unless they "make a deal before it's too late." This threat carries substantial weight because Cuba relies on Venezuelan oil for approximately one-third of its energy consumption, which is about 30,000 to 35,000 barrels a day. With Washington now effectively running Venezuela's oil exports, the U.S. has massive economic leverage to pressure the Cuban government into a fundamental realignment.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel has pushed back against these threats, stating that Havana is currently not negotiating with Washington and that Cuba is still a sovereign nation. Cuba's foreign ministry also denied

the claims that they were being paid for security services to the Maduro government, an allegation used by Trump to justify cutting ties. Nevertheless, the situation in Latin America is becoming harder to ignore as the financial underpinnings of the Cuban state begin to erode. Analysts at **CSIS** have pointed out that the **"strategic shock"** of Maduro's capture has left Havana more isolated than ever, especially since their old "oil-for-security" deal has completely fallen apart. This isolation serves as a primary driver for the "Donroe" strategy, which seeks to use energy deprivation as a tool for regime modification.

Domestic Impact in Cuba

Inside Cuba, the loss of Venezuelan oil has **triggered a severe domestic crisis** that threatens the very fabric of the state's social contract. Havana and other major cities are dealing with constant power outages, low food rations, and inflation as the state struggles to compensate for the sudden energy shortfall. This failure of basic infrastructure is not merely a logistical problem but a political one, as it undermines the population's confidence in the government's ability to provide essential services. As a result, the risk of social unrest has risen, alongside renewed migration toward the U.S. and neighbouring states, creating a potential regional humanitarian crisis.

Security concerns have also intensified following the kinetic actions in Caracas. Reports that **32 Cuban members of Maduro's guard** were reportedly killed during the U.S. raid have placed the Cuban military on high alert. This development further limits Havana's strategic options, as the leadership may feel compelled to increase domestic surveillance to prevent internal dissent. Furthermore, the death of Cuban personnel on foreign soil has created a sense of "strategic siege" that makes diplomatic compromise appear like an act of surrender. Therefore, the leadership is forced to choose between heightened internal repression, a vulnerable external negotiation, or a desperate deeper alignment with remaining external partners like Russia.

Regional Fallout and International Reactions

Regional responses have been uneven, exposing the lack of a unified Latin American front against U.S. reassertion. The Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum recently announced that Mexico will keep sending fuel to Cuba as a "gesture of solidarity," despite the U.S. blockade. This position placed Mexico in a difficult balancing act between its largest trading partner and its long-standing diplomatic ties with Havana. Other regional actors and institutions, such as the Organisation of American States (OAS) and Brazil, have issued limited or ambiguous responses, reflecting a desire to avoid direct confrontation with the current U.S. administration.

Russia and China have both strongly criticised the U.S. mission in Venezuela, condemning it as a violation of international law and the **UN**

Charter's prohibition on the use of force under Article 2(4). Maduro was a key ally in the region for Russia, providing Moscow with a strategic foothold in the Caribbean. Whilst China is trying to figure out how to protect their massive investments across Latin America amid growing U.S. willingness to apply coercive measures. These extra-regional powers view the "Donroe Doctrine" as a direct threat to the multipolar world order they wish to cultivate. In summary, the doctrine has not only destabilised individual states but has also fractured the existing international legal consensus on regional sovereignty.

For Europe, the enactment of the "Donroe Doctrine" entails both economic and strategic risks that cannot be ignored. Extraterritorial sanctions from the U.S., especially under the **Helms-Burton Act**, expose European companies operating in or with Cuba to legal and financial penalties. Meanwhile, heightened instability in the Caribbean could disrupt trade routes, energy markets, and regional security dynamics that directly affect European interests. The following visualisation illustrates the stark contrast between the operational priorities of the U.S. under this new doctrine and the EU's established diplomatic framework.

European leaders could potentially act as a "middleman" in this case to ensure that regional tensions do not escalate into a broader conflict. The EU must ideally protect their companies' money while keeping a seat at the table with both Washington and Havana. Their best tool might be the **EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA)**. Even with the U.S. "maximum pressure" strategy making things difficult, **Article 5** of the treaty can be used to push back. The Article can be viewed as a diplomatic "escape hatch"; it could force both sides to negotiate about sanctions. This could allow Europe to question the "Donroe Doctrine" without explicitly aligning against Washington. Ultimately, the European Union's ability to navigate this doctrine will define its future role as a strategic actor in the Western Hemisphere.