

**II. БӨЛІМ.
АЙМАҚТАНУ
РАЗДЕЛ II.
РЕГИОНОВЕДЕНИЕ
PART II.
REGIONAL STUDIES**

**UDC 327.5
IRSTI 11.25.40
<https://doi.org/10.48371/ISMO.2025.59.1.010>**

**US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS VENEZUELA AND THE
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)
UNDER PRESIDENT TRUMP**

***Dr. Raghunath Mahabir ¹, Mr. Keron Ganpat ²**

^{*1}University of the Southern Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago,

² University of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago

Abstract. The aim of this paper is to analyze the United States' foreign policy towards Venezuela and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) under President Donald Trump, focusing on his first administration (2017-2021) and his new term that began on January 20, 2025. This study will delve into the intricate relationship between geopolitical strategy, economic interests, and regional diplomacy in shaping U.S. actions in the region. The Trump administration's approach to Venezuela was characterized by a "maximum pressure" campaign, which included the imposition of stringent economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and support for opposition groups to weaken Nicolás Maduro's regime. The policy aimed to promote democratic governance in Venezuela, but it inadvertently worsened the country's humanitarian crisis, leading to mass displacement and significant social unrest. Simultaneously, it created tension between the U.S. and CARICOM member states, many of which adopted a more cautious or neutral stance toward the Venezuelan crisis.

This paper explores the division within CARICOM regarding Venezuela, highlighting the contrasting perspectives of member states, some of which opposed the U.S. approach, while others aligned with it. These differences reflect broader tensions between regional solidarity, which seeks non-interference in domestic matters, and external pressures from major powers like the U.S. Furthermore, the study examines how U.S. policies affected regional stability, economic development, and multilateral cooperation in the Caribbean. In the context of heightened political polarization and economic uncertainty, the paper provides insights into the evolving dynamics of U.S.-CARICOM relations and their implications for the future of the region.

Key words: Trump, CARICOM, Venezuela, economic policies, sanctions, foreign policy, Nicolas Maduro, regional diplomacy

Introduction

Venezuela is a state located at the northern end of South America occupying a roughly triangular area that is larger than the combined areas of France and Germany. Venezuela is bounded by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to the north, Guyana to the east, Brazil to the south, and Colombia to the southwest and west [1]. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is a grouping of twenty-one countries: fifteen Member States and six Associate Members. It is home to approximately sixteen million citizens, 60% of whom are under the age of 30, and from the main ethnic groups of Indigenous Peoples, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Chinese, Portuguese and Javanese. The Community is multi-lingual; with English as the major language complemented by French and Dutch and variations of these, as well as African and Asian expressions [2]. Because of the geographical closeness as well as the different economic, historic and socio-cultural links between Venezuela and CARICOM, whatever happens to and in the Venezuelan economy has both direct and indirect impacts on CARICOM. As such, their relationship with the US are intertwined and hence the study involving both entities.

Between 2017 and 2021, the Trump administration implemented a “maximum pressure” campaign against Nicolás Maduro’s government, which included severe economic sanctions targeting Venezuela’s oil industry and key officials [3]. In 2019, the U.S. recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as Venezuela’s interim president, further escalating diplomatic hostilities. This approach aimed to isolate Maduro internationally but also deepened Venezuela’s economic and humanitarian crises. The 2017-2021 Trump administration’s focus on regime change in Venezuela, through economic sanctions and political isolation, not only deepened the Venezuelan crisis but also sparked divisions among CARICOM nations. While some member states aligned with U.S. interests, others advocated for non-intervention and dialogue, highlighting the complexities of regional solidarity in the face of external pressures. This paper explores the nuances of these policies, evaluating their impact on the geopolitical landscape, economic stability, and the long-standing relationship between the United States and CARICOM. By analyzing the interplay between U.S. objectives and regional responses, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of a critical period in inter-American relations and examines what has also transpired in the first six weeks of the second Trump administration which began in January 2025 [4].

The administration’s policies reflected a broader strategy to counter socialism in the region while aligning with allies who opposed Maduro. However, these actions also drew criticism for exacerbating suffering among Venezuelans and for sidelining multilateral solutions. These policies had significant political, economic, and humanitarian implications for Venezuela and the broader region including the Caribbean Community, given its economic ties, political alliances, and geographical proximity.

Since 1973, The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has played a pivotal role in regional geopolitics as a collective voice for 15 member states in the Caribbean, advancing their shared interests in areas such as economic development, trade, climate change, and global diplomacy. Established to foster regional integration and unity, CARICOM has consistently emphasized principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and mutual respect in its dealings with external powers [5].

In the context of U.S. foreign policy, CARICOM holds strategic importance due to its geographic proximity to key shipping routes, its rich energy resources, and its collective influence within international organizations like the United Nations. The bloc often serves as a counterbalance to external powers, ensuring that the unique concerns of small island developing states (SIDS) are heard on the global stage.

Moreover, CARICOM's ability to mediate and advocate for peaceful resolutions to crises - such as its diplomatic stance on the Venezuelan political situation—highlights its role as a stabilizing force in the Americas. Its influence, however, is not without challenges, as differing national interests among member states sometimes test its cohesion when responding to external pressures, such as those exerted by the U.S.

Materials and Methods

Objectives and Scope of the Paper

This paper aims to critically examine the United States' foreign policy towards Venezuela and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) under President Donald Trump, with a focus on its implications for regional stability, diplomacy, and economic relations. The objectives are as follows:

To analyze the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Venezuela, including its use of sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and recognition of opposition leadership.

To explore CARICOM's responses to U.S. policies, highlighting the divergent stances among member states and the impact on regional unity.

To assess the geopolitical and economic consequences of U.S.- Venezuela relations on CARICOM nations, including shifts in alliances and economic vulnerabilities.

To evaluate the broader implications of U.S.- CARICOM interactions during this period, emphasizing challenges to multilateral diplomacy and prospects for future collaboration.

The scope of this study encompasses a review of U.S. policy actions from 2017 to 2021, the responses and policy positions of CARICOM states during this period, and the broader ramifications for inter-American relations. The paper provides a nuanced understanding of a complex and polarized geopolitical landscape, offering insights that are relevant for policymakers, scholars, and regional stakeholders. The first six weeks of the second Trump administration will also be discussed.

Results

1. Economic Impact

The Trump administration imposed harsh economic sanctions on Venezuela, particularly targeting its oil industry (PDVSA), the main source of revenue for the government. These sanctions cut Venezuela off from global financial markets, leading to severe economic contraction, hyperinflation, and shortages of essential goods. Secondary sanctions discouraged third-party countries, including China, Russia, and India, from doing business with Venezuela, further isolating the nation. These measures also extended to the Central Bank of Venezuela and other financial institutions, effectively cutting off the regime's access to international markets.

The economic sanctions imposed by the Trump administration on Venezuela had profound economic and political implications, both domestically and regionally. These sanctions, particularly those targeting the oil sector, were designed to weaken Nicolás Maduro's regime by cutting off its primary source of revenue. However, their effects extended far beyond the intended political objectives. Three major economic implications included the following:

Collapse of the Oil Industry: Venezuela, home to the world's largest proven oil reserves, saw its oil production plummet due to sanctions on its state-owned oil company, PDVSA. This led to a significant loss of revenue, crippling the country's economy.

2. Humanitarian Crisis: The sanctions exacerbated existing economic hardships, contributing to hyperinflation, food and medicine shortages, and mass migration. Millions of Venezuelans fled the country, seeking refuge in neighboring nations [6].

3. Regional Economic Impact: The sanctions also affected CARICOM nations with economic ties to Venezuela, particularly those reliant on the Petro-Caribe program, which provided subsidized oil. The program's decline forced these nations to seek alternative, often more expensive, energy sources.

U.S. sanctions significantly reduced Venezuela's oil exports, which were already in decline due to mismanagement and corruption. This led to fuel shortages within Venezuela, affecting transportation, electricity, and food production. Many Caribbean nations, especially those in Petrocaribe [7], relied on Venezuelan oil at preferential rates. U.S. sanctions on PDVSA (Venezuela's state oil company) disrupted this arrangement. Countries like Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti had to find alternative energy sources, often at higher costs. Some Caribbean nations that restructured their energy sectors away from dependence on Venezuela (e.g., Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago) benefited from the shifting energy dynamics.

The economic collapse in Venezuela reduced trade with Caribbean nations that previously exported goods and services there. Sanctions discouraged Caribbean banks and businesses from interacting with Venezuela due to fears of U.S. secondary sanctions (financial penalties for working with sanctioned entities). Today, Caribbean banks and businesses are still cautious about dealing with Venezuela, fearing U.S. secondary sanctions. If sanctions remain, trade and

investment with Venezuela will stay low, further reducing economic ties between Venezuela and the Caribbean.

2. Political and Diplomatic Impact

President Trump was one of the first world leaders to recognize opposition leader Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela in 2019. The U.S. led an international coalition (including the EU and several Latin American countries) to isolate Maduro diplomatically. The strategy failed to remove Maduro, as he retained control over the military, state institutions, and key foreign allies (Russia, China, Iran, and Cuba).

The U.S. pressured Latin American and Caribbean countries to cut ties with Maduro's government, using diplomatic channels like the Organization of American States (OAS). The Trump administration also sanctioned individuals and businesses suspected of supporting Maduro. The U.S. urged Caribbean countries to support Juan Guaidó and isolate Maduro. The CARICOM was divided—some countries (like Haiti, the Bahamas, and Jamaica) sided with the U.S., while others (like St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Dominica) backed Maduro. The Trump administration rewarded some pro-U.S. Caribbean countries with increased economic aid and trade benefits.

The pressure to take sides strained CARICOM solidarity, as some member states preferred a neutral, non-interventionist approach. The U.S. hosted meetings with select Caribbean leaders (excluding pro-Maduro states), further dividing the regional bloc. Political implications of these events included but were not limited to the following:

Strengthening of Maduro's Regime: Contrary to U.S. intentions, the sanctions allowed Maduro to consolidate power by blaming the country's economic woes on foreign interference. The narratives resonated with some domestic and international audiences.

Geopolitical Shifts: The sanctions pushed Venezuela closer to U.S. adversaries like China, Russia, and Iran, who provided financial and political support to the Maduro government. This realignment challenged U.S. influence in the region.

Divisions within CARICOM: The sanctions created rifts among CARICOM member states, with some supporting U.S. policies and others advocating for non-intervention and dialogue. This division highlighted the challenges of maintaining regional solidarity under external pressure.

The Trump administration's diplomatic efforts to isolate Nicolás Maduro's regime were multifaceted, aiming to delegitimize his leadership on the global stage and rally international support for opposition leader Juan Guaidó. These efforts included:

Recognition of Guaidó: The U.S. spearheaded a campaign to recognize Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president, gaining the support of over 50 countries. This move was intended to undermine Maduro's claim to power and bolster the opposition's legitimacy.

Exclusion from International Organizations: The U.S. worked to remove Maduro's representatives from key international bodies, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), while advocating for Venezuela's suspension from regional forums.

Formation of the Lima Group: Although not directly a U.S. initiative, the Lima Group—a coalition of Latin American countries and Canada - aligned with U.S. objectives by condemning Maduro's regime and calling for democratic reforms in Venezuela.

Sanctions and Diplomatic Pressure: Beyond economic sanctions, the U.S. applied diplomatic pressure on countries that maintained ties with Maduro, urging them to sever relations and support democratic transition efforts.

Humanitarian Aid as Leverage: The U.S. used humanitarian aid as a tool to challenge Maduro's authority, organizing high-profile efforts to deliver aid to Venezuela despite the regime's resistance.

Despite these efforts, Maduro retained the support of key allies, including Russia, China, and Cuba, which countered U.S. initiatives and provided economic and political backing to his government. The lack of a unified international response also limited the effectiveness of these diplomatic strategies.

The interplay between regional solidarity and external influence was a defining challenge for CARICOM in responding to the Venezuelan crisis during the Trump administration. While CARICOM has historically emphasized unity and mutual respect among its member states, the external pressures exerted by the United States on Venezuela highlighted internal divisions and tested the bloc's cohesion. Within CARICOM however, a shared regional solidarity was seen in three areas as seen below.

Commitment to Sovereignty and Non-Intervention: CARICOM traditionally champions the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and peaceful resolution of disputes. This collective stance was reflected in calls for dialogue and mediation in Venezuela, as opposed to unilateral actions or external interference.

CARICOM as a Mediator: The organization sought to mediate between the U.S. and Venezuela, proposing multilateral solutions to the crisis. For example, CARICOM supported initiatives like the Montevideo Mechanism, which encouraged dialogue between opposing Venezuelan factions without foreign intervention [8].

Shared Vulnerabilities: As small island developing states (SIDS), CARICOM members share concerns about regional stability and economic impacts stemming from the Venezuelan crisis, including the decline of the Petro Caribe program and the influx of refugees.

CARICOM was also burdened by three external influences including:

U.S. Pressure on Member States: The Trump administration's aggressive stance on Venezuela placed significant pressure on individual CARICOM nations to align with its policies. This was particularly evident in diplomatic efforts to garner support for recognizing Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's interim president.

Economic Leverage: The U.S. used its economic and geopolitical power to influence CARICOM members. Some nations, reliant on U.S. trade and financial assistance, faced difficult decisions in balancing their foreign policy alignments with regional solidarity.

Influence of Other Global Powers: The Venezuelan crisis also brought the involvement of countries like China and Russia, which supported Nicolás Maduro

and offered economic assistance. These dynamics created additional layers of external influence on CARICOM's stance.

These competing forces created divisions within CARICOM, with some nations prioritizing regional unity and non-intervention, while others aligned more closely with external powers for political or economic reasons. This tension underscored the difficulty of maintaining a unified regional position in the face of powerful external influences and conflicting national interests.

3. Humanitarian Consequences

While the Trump administration blamed Venezuela's crisis on Maduro's corruption and mismanagement, the sanctions worsened economic conditions for ordinary Venezuelans. Shortages of food, medicine, and essential services increased, leading to one of the worst humanitarian crises in the region. Over 7 million Venezuelans fled the country due to economic hardship, with neighboring countries like Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Curacao, Peru, and the Dominican Republic struggling to handle the influx. The Trump administration provided some humanitarian aid to Venezuelan refugees but also maintained strict immigration policies, making it difficult for many to seek asylum in the U.S.

Small island nations within CARICOM struggled to accommodate migrants, leading to social tensions, economic strain, and political controversy over deportation policies. The influx of migrants has overwhelmed healthcare, education, and housing services, especially in Trinidad & Tobago and Curaçao, where large numbers of Venezuelans arrived.

4. Security and Regional Stability

Trump and his officials repeatedly suggested the possibility of military action to remove Maduro, but no direct intervention occurred. The U.S. increased cooperation with Colombian military forces to counter Venezuelan-backed drug trafficking and guerrilla groups. The U.S. backed several opposition-led uprisings, including the failed April 2019 coup attempt led by Guaidó. However, Maduro retained power, largely due to military loyalty and foreign support from Russia, China, Iran, and Cuba.

The economic crisis in Venezuela led to increased illegal migration, smuggling, and human trafficking in the Caribbean. Reports of drug trafficking and arms smuggling from Venezuela into the Caribbean has raised security concerns. The Trump administration increased naval patrols in the Caribbean, citing concerns over drug trafficking and Venezuela's ties to organized crime. Some Caribbean leaders worried that the militarization of the region could increase tensions and destabilize peace.

The interplay between regional solidarity and external influence was a defining challenge for CARICOM in responding to the Venezuelan crisis during the Trump administration. While CARICOM has historically emphasized unity and mutual respect among its member states, the external pressures exerted by the United States on Venezuela highlighted internal divisions and tested the bloc's cohesion.

5. Climate and Disaster Relief Policy

Trump's "America First" approach reduced U.S. financial aid for Caribbean climate resilience and disaster recovery- a trend that could return under a future administration with a similar stance. Some Caribbean nations saw the loss of Petrocaribe assistance (Venezuelan oil-for-development funding) as a major blow, particularly after natural disasters. If a future U.S. president continues isolating Venezuela, Caribbean nations will lose potential disaster relief funding from Petrocaribe.

Trump's Venezuela policy had mixed effects on the Caribbean. While some countries benefited from closer U.S. ties, others faced economic hardship, political divisions, and social strain due to sanctions, migration pressures, and disrupted trade ties. The forced alignment on Venezuela weakened CARICOM unity, and the refugee crisis put immense pressure on smaller Caribbean states.

As of March 3, 2025, President Trump's foreign policy toward Venezuela reflects a return to a more aggressive stance, reminiscent of his previous term. Recent actions indicate a shift from the more conciliatory approach of the prior administration.

In late February 2025, President Trump revoked oil concessions that had been granted to Venezuela under the previous administration. This move was influenced by pressure from Cuban-American Republican members of Congress who opposed enriching Nicolás Maduro's regime. The cancellation surprised both the Venezuelan government and companies like Chevron, which had been operating under these concessions [9].

The Trump administration announced the termination of the Temporary Protected Status program for Venezuelan migrants, which had previously shielded hundreds of thousands from deportation. This decision has been legally challenged by immigrant rights organizations, arguing that it violates constitutional protections and could lead to mass deportations.

President Trump has expressed interest in more assertive actions toward Venezuela, including the possibility of military intervention. Statements from administration officials suggest that all options are being considered to remove Maduro from power and restore democracy in Venezuela. These developments signal a return to a hardline approach in U.S. policy toward Venezuela, focusing on economic pressure, immigration policy changes, and potential military considerations.

Caribbean nations that relied on Venezuelan oil may face supply shortages and increased energy costs. Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, is seeking a U.S. license extension to continue developing the Dragon natural gas project in Venezuela, highlighting the region's dependence on Venezuelan energy resources.

The cessation of oil operations could lead to reduced revenues for Caribbean economies involved in energy partnerships with Venezuela, affecting employment and economic stability. Caribbean countries may face pressure to align with U.S. policies, potentially straining relations with Venezuela and impacting regional cooperation. The Trump administration has also taken a stricter approach to immigration, affecting Venezuelan migrants. They have brokered agreements

with Latin American countries to facilitate the deportation and repatriation of migrants, including Venezuelans. This strategy aims to deter migrants from attempting to reach the U.S. border.

Stricter U.S. immigration policies may lead to increased migration of Venezuelans to Caribbean nations, adding pressure to their social services and economies. Caribbean countries may need to address humanitarian issues arising from an influx of migrants, including shelter, healthcare, and employment.

The U.S. administration's focus on regime change in Venezuela could have security implications for the Caribbean's stability; as efforts to oust Maduro may lead to political instability in Venezuela, potentially causing spillover effects such as increased crime and trafficking in neighboring Caribbean countries. The U.S. may also increase its military presence in the region to support its objectives in Venezuela, affecting the geopolitical landscape of the Caribbean.

The long-term effects of Trump's Venezuela policy will continue to shape economic, political, and security dynamics in the Caribbean. If sanctions remain in place, Caribbean nations will sustain economic losses and migration pressures. Political divisions within CARICOM could persist, weakening regional unity. Security risks linked to crime and migration will require U.S.-Caribbean cooperation, regardless of the Venezuela policy direction. Future U.S. administrations will determine whether these trends continue or shift, but the Caribbean must prepare for prolonged uncertainty in its relations with Venezuela.

President Trump's current foreign policy stance on Venezuela is characterized by increased economic sanctions, stricter immigration controls, and a focus on regime change. These actions have significant implications for the Caribbean, impacting energy supplies, economic stability, migration patterns, and regional security.

US Foreign Policy Towards CARICOM (Caribbean Community)

The Trump administration's approach to CARICOM was transactional with a focus on countering China's influence, securing diplomatic support on Venezuela, and offering economic incentives. Some of the key actions and policies included the following:

Selective Engagement & Pressure on the Venezuela Issue: The US sought CARICOM's support for Guaidó and against Maduro. Countries like Jamaica, Haiti, and the Bahamas supported US policies, while others like Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines resisted interventionist approaches. In 2019, Trump met with select CARICOM leaders in a move seen as divisive.

China Containment Strategy: The US warned Caribbean nations against deepening economic ties with China, which had been investing in infrastructure through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Furthermore, the Trump administration emphasized US-Caribbean trade relations but offered limited economic alternatives to Chinese investments.

Hemispheric Security & Counter-Narcotics Efforts: Trump expanded counter-narcotics operations in the Caribbean, particularly near Venezuela and

the Caribbean Basin. The US boosted security cooperation with select Caribbean nations to curb illicit trafficking.

Hurricane and COVID-19 Response: US aid during the hurricane season (e.g., Dorian in 2019) was provided but seen as inconsistent and the COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy was minimal, as the US prioritized domestic needs over regional distribution.

United States and CARICOM: 2025 and Beyond

As we examine the first eight weeks of the Trump administration, new issues have developed. These include the following:

- Need for re-engagement with the USA: Following a Summit of the Heads of Government of CARICOM in February 2025, CARICOM leaders have expressed intentions to engage with President Trump amidst shifts in U.S. foreign and trade policies. Discussions are anticipated to address how these policies will impact the region, especially smaller countries within the OECS sub-region.

- Opposition to U.S. Policies on Cuban Medical Missions: Caribbean leaders are opposing a new U.S. policy targeting Cuban medical missions, which are deemed critical for healthcare in the region. The U.S. has threatened visa restrictions for those involved in these missions, labeling them as “forced labor”. Leaders from countries like Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have publicly opposed the policy, emphasizing the importance of Cuban medical support.

In summary, the U.S. maintains a firm stance against Nicolás Maduro’s government in Venezuela through increased sanctions and diplomatic non-recognition, while also navigating complex relations with CARICOM nations, particularly concerning policies affecting regional healthcare and economic collaborations.

Undoubtedly, the U.S. policies towards Venezuela under the Trump administration had significant implications for regional stability and shifts in alliances across Latin America and the Caribbean. These policies, particularly the “maximum pressure” campaign, created ripple effects that reshaped geopolitical dynamics in the region.

Impact on Regional Stability

The worsening humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, exacerbated by U.S. sanctions, led to mass migration. Neighboring countries, including CARICOM nations, faced challenges in accommodating refugees, straining their resources and social systems. The decline of Venezuela’s Petro Caribe program, which provided subsidized oil to Caribbean nations, forced many CARICOM states to seek alternative energy sources, impacting their economic stability. The crisis has also heightened concerns about regional security, including the potential for increased crime and instability due to the influx of displaced populations and the collapse of governance in Venezuela.

Shifts in Alliances

Venezuela’s alignment with countries like China, Russia, and Iran deepened as these nations provided economic and political support to Nicolás Maduro’s regime. This realignment challenged U.S. influence in the region. The U.S.

policies created rifts among CARICOM member states, with some aligning with U.S. objectives and others advocating for non-intervention. These divisions highlighted the challenges of maintaining regional solidarity under external pressures. The crisis also prompted some Latin American and Caribbean nations to strengthen regional cooperation and seek alternative alliances to address shared challenges, reducing reliance on traditional powers like the U.S. These developments without doubt underscore the complex interplay between U.S. foreign policy, regional stability, and shifting alliances in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The role of global powers (China, Russia) in counterbalancing U.S. influence. China and Russia have played pivotal roles in counterbalancing U.S. influence in Venezuela, particularly during the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign. Their involvement has been multifaceted, encompassing economic, political, and military dimensions.

China's Role:

1. Economic Support: China has been Venezuela's largest creditor, providing over \$60 billion in loans, often backed by oil exports. This financial lifeline has helped sustain the Maduro regime despite U.S. sanctions.

2. Strategic Partnership: The China-Venezuela relationship, established during Hugo Chávez's presidency, evolved into a strategic partnership. China has invested heavily in Venezuela's infrastructure and energy sectors, ensuring a steady flow of oil to meet its domestic demands.

3. Diplomatic Backing: While China has maintained a relatively low profile in Venezuela's political crisis, it has consistently opposed U.S. sanctions and interventionist policies, advocating for dialogue and peaceful resolution.

Russia's Role:

1. Military Cooperation: Russia has provided significant military support to Venezuela, including arms sales and defense training. This partnership has bolstered the Maduro regime's security apparatus and deterred potential external interventions.

2. Energy Collaboration: Russian energy companies, such as Rosneft, have invested in Venezuela's oil industry, helping to mitigate the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country's primary revenue source.

3. Geopolitical Strategy: Russia's involvement in Venezuela is part of its broader strategy to challenge U.S. influence in the Western Hemisphere. By supporting Maduro, Russia has positioned itself as a key player in Latin American geopolitics.

Combined Impact:

The support from China and Russia has not only provided economic and military assistance to the Maduro regime but also complicated U.S. efforts to isolate Venezuela. Their involvement underscores the shifting dynamics of global power, where emerging and established powers challenge traditional U.S. dominance in the region.

Challenges for CARICOM economies linked to the Venezuelan crisis.

The Venezuelan crisis, compounded by U.S. sanctions, posed significant

challenges for CARICOM economies, particularly those with close economic ties to Venezuela. Some of the key challenges include:

Energy Dependence and the Decline of PetroCaribe -The PetroCaribe program, which provided subsidized oil to many CARICOM nations, was severely disrupted as Venezuela's oil production collapsed. This forced member states to seek alternative energy sources, often at higher costs, straining national budgets and increasing energy insecurity.

Trade Disruptions-Venezuela's economic collapse led to a decline in trade with CARICOM nations. Countries that exported goods or services to Venezuela experienced reduced demand, impacting their trade balances and economic growth.

Influx of Migrants-The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela resulted in mass migration, with some CARICOM nations, such as Trinidad and Tobago, receiving significant numbers of Venezuelan refugees. This placed additional pressure on social services, healthcare, and housing infrastructure in host countries.

Economic Vulnerabilities-Smaller CARICOM economies, already vulnerable to external shocks, faced increased economic instability due to the ripple effects of the Venezuelan crisis. The loss of affordable energy and trade opportunities compounded existing challenges, such as high debt levels and limited fiscal space.

Geopolitical Pressures-The crisis exposed CARICOM nations to geopolitical pressures from external powers, particularly the U.S., which sought to influence their foreign policy positions on Venezuela. Balancing these pressures with their economic interests and regional solidarity proved challenging.

These challenges underscored the interconnectedness of CARICOM economies with Venezuela and highlighted the need for regional strategies to mitigate external shocks.

Opportunities for U.S.-CARICOM economic engagement.

While several challenges may confront the US-CARICOM relationship, there are several opportunities for economic engagement particularly in areas that align with mutual interests and address regional challenges. These include trade expansion, renewable energy development, nearshoring opportunities, digital trade and innovation, food security and agricultural development, tourism and cultural exchanges.

Trade Expansion-The U.S. and CARICOM can enhance trade relations by leveraging frameworks like the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to increase the export of Caribbean goods to the U.S. market. Expanding trade preferences and addressing barriers to market entry can boost economic growth in the region.

Renewable Energy Development-With CARICOM's focus on sustainable development, the U.S. can support renewable energy projects in the Caribbean. Investments in solar, wind, and geothermal energy can help CARICOM nations reduce their reliance on imported fossil fuels and achieve energy security.

Nearshoring Opportunities-The U.S. can encourage nearshoring of manufacturing and services to CARICOM nations, taking advantage of their geographic proximity and skilled labor force. This can create jobs in the region while strengthening supply chain resilience for U.S. companies.

Digital Trade and Innovation-Collaboration in digital trade and technology can drive economic diversification in CARICOM. The U.S. can support initiatives to improve digital infrastructure, promote e-commerce, and foster innovation in sectors like fintech and digital services.

Food Security and Agricultural Development-The U.S. and CARICOM can work together to enhance agricultural sustainability and food security. This includes sharing expertise in agricultural biotechnology, improving supply chains, and supporting local food production.

Tourism and Cultural Exchange-Tourism remains a vital sector for CARICOM economies. The U.S. can invest in sustainable tourism initiatives and promote cultural exchange programs to strengthen ties and boost the region's economic recovery post-pandemic.

These opportunities highlight the potential for a mutually beneficial partnership that addresses CARICOM's development needs while advancing U.S. strategic interests in the region.

Analysis of U.S.-CARICOM relations during the Trump era

During the previous Trump administration, U.S.-CARICOM relations were shaped by a mix of strategic engagement and policy shifts that tested the resilience of this longstanding partnership. While the U.S. maintained its role as a key economic and security partner for the Caribbean, certain policies and actions created tensions and highlighted differing priorities. Some of the key aspects of this relationship revolved around economic engagement, diplomatic relations, climate change and development and security cooperation.

Economic Engagement: The U.S. remained a major trading partner for CARICOM nations, with initiatives like the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) continuing to facilitate trade. However, there was limited expansion of economic programs tailored to address the region's evolving needs. The decline of Venezuela's PetroCaribe program, exacerbated by U.S. sanctions, created energy challenges for CARICOM nations. This presented opportunities for the U.S. to strengthen energy partnerships, though these were not fully realized during the Trump era.

Diplomatic Relations: The Trump administration's focus on Venezuela and its "maximum pressure" campaign placed CARICOM nations in a difficult position. While some member states aligned with U.S. policies, others emphasized non-intervention and dialogue, reflecting CARICOM's commitment to sovereignty and regional solidarity.

High-level engagements, such as meetings between U.S. officials and select CARICOM leaders, underscored the strategic importance of the region. However, these interactions sometimes created divisions within CARICOM, as not all member states were included.

Climate Change and Development: The Trump administration's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and reduced emphasis on climate change initiatives were at odds with CARICOM's priorities. As small island developing states (SIDS), CARICOM nations view climate change as an existential threat and sought greater U.S. support for mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Security Cooperation: The U.S. continued to support regional security initiatives, including efforts to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. However, CARICOM leaders expressed concerns about the impact of U.S. gun policies on regional security, citing the flow of illicit firearms into the Caribbean.

Discussion

Challenges and Opportunities

The Trump era highlighted both the strengths and vulnerabilities of U.S.-CARICOM relations. While economic and security ties remained strong, differing priorities on issues like climate change and Venezuela underscored the need for a more inclusive and collaborative approach. Moving forward, there is potential to build on shared interests and address areas of divergence to strengthen this critical partnership.

Policy Recommendations for Future U.S.-CARICOM Engagement Under Trumps Second Administration

In the month and half, he has been in office, President Donald Trump has quickly moved to erase references to climate change from federal policies and withdraw the U.S. from global commitments like the Paris Agreement focused on getting countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions to help limit global warming and mitigate against the impacts of climate change. Trump has called the Paris climate agreement “unfair” and “a rip off” to which he won’t subject American industry. It is under this dramatic shift in U.S. foreign policy – along with freezes by Trump to foreign aid, the gutting of the U.S.’s leading humanitarian agency, withdrawals from global agencies and the ramp up in deportations of undocumented migrants – that prime ministers and presidents representing CARICOM met for the Forty – Eighth Regular Meeting of Heads of Government in Barbados during the period February 19-21, 2025. “CARICOM has to engage the Trump administration,” St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves told the Miami Herald. “They are our neighbor, the United States, and we are theirs. Historically we have had links; geographically, we are close; a lot of Caribbean people inside the U.S., lots of persons come from the U.S. as tourists. They trade, we sent a lot of stuff to them, goods and services. We have to talk.”

To strengthen U.S.-CARICOM relations and address shared challenges under the second Trump administration, a set of forward-looking policy recommendations can guide future collaboration:

Deepen Energy Partnerships-Expand Renewable Energy Projects: CARICOM needs to discuss and negotiate with the US to invest in renewable energy infrastructure in CARICOM nations, such as solar, wind, and geothermal projects. This will help the region achieve energy independence, lower costs, and advance sustainability goals. Secondly, in relation to strengthening energy security initiatives the US should be encouraged to partner with CARICOM to develop regional energy strategies that reduce reliance on external suppliers and build resilient, integrated energy systems.

Support Climate Resilience-while the Trump administration has signaled its intention not to spend money on issues related to climate change, CARICOM states need to increase funding for climate adaptation and allocate resources for disaster preparedness, coastal protection, and sustainable agriculture to mitigate the impact of climate change in the region. They may need to look towards other areas besides the US such as the EU. Also, CARICOM states would need assistance from the EU and other sources to foster technology transfer including the provision of technical expertise and innovations in climate-smart technologies, ensuring CARICOM can better adapt to environmental challenges.

Enhance Trade and Investment-Another area for discussion and collaboration with the US could be in the modernization of trade agreements including the expansion of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) to cover additional sectors, such as digital goods and services, to promote economic diversification. CARICOM should also focus on attracting investment by establishing incentives for U.S. companies to invest in manufacturing, technology, and tourism in CARICOM nations, creating jobs and boosting economic growth.

Focus on Digital Transformation-In this sector CARICOM should seek assistance from the US in two main areas: Building Digital Infrastructure, that is collaborate on improving broadband connectivity and digital platforms to enhance competitiveness in the global economy and secondly in the promotion of digital education, namely investing in programs that develop digital literacy and skills to prepare CARICOM's workforce for the demands of the future economy.

Prioritize Health Partnerships-the US and CARICOM has a long history of health partnerships and this must be strengthened. This can be done by expanding collaborations to improve access to quality healthcare, including support for vaccine distribution and pandemic preparedness and by developing public health initiatives including addressing pressing regional health challenges, such as non-communicable diseases and mental health, through coordinated programs.

Reaffirm Multilateral Commitments-in dealing with the new Trump administration, CARICOM needs to collaborate through the OAS and other platforms and in so doing leverage multilateral organizations to address shared challenges like migration, security, and governance, ensuring CARICOM states have a strong voice in regional discussions. CARICOM should be able to promote inclusive diplomacy, that is to avoid any other state or organization having selective engagement with individual CARICOM nations and prioritize comprehensive, bloc-wide partnerships.

Bolster Security Cooperation –the US and CARICOM has a long history in various aspects of security cooperation. In its fight to combat transnational crime CARICOM needs to continue joint initiatives to counter drug trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal firearms, while addressing their root causes. Also, the US should be encouraged to assist in further enhancing regional security capabilities by providing technical assistance, equipment, and training to bolster CARICOM's capacity to address security threats.

Invest in Education and Cultural Exchange-as has been done over successive years, requests should be made to the US for an expansion in scholarship programs

including the offering of more opportunities for CARICOM students to study in the U.S., fostering future leaders with a strong connection to both regions. Also, CARICOM should support cultural initiatives by promoting cultural exchanges to strengthen people-to-people ties and deepen mutual understanding. By implementing these recommendations, the U.S. can rebuild trust, advance shared goals, and foster a partnership that prioritizes mutual respect, sustainability, and inclusive development.

Conclusion

This paper examined U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) under President Donald Trump, (2017-2021, and Jan 2025-March 2025) focusing on its geopolitical, economic, and diplomatic implications. Key findings in six main areas include:

1. U.S.-Venezuela Relations: The Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign, including economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, aimed to destabilize Nicolás Maduro's regime. While these actions failed to achieve regime change, they exacerbated Venezuela's economic collapse and humanitarian crisis. Undoubtedly, in this second term, the Trump administration would continue this policy of "maximum pressure."

2. CARICOM's Divided Response: CARICOM nations demonstrated divergent stances on U.S. policies. While some members supported U.S. objectives, others upheld principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, advocating for dialogue and peaceful resolution of the Venezuelan crisis.

3. Economic and Humanitarian Impacts: The sanctions disrupted regional economies, particularly through the decline of Venezuela's PetroCaribe program, which created energy challenges for CARICOM nations. The humanitarian crisis in Venezuela also led to mass migration, straining resources in host countries like Trinidad and Tobago.

4. Geopolitical Realignment: The crisis facilitated closer ties between Venezuela and U.S. adversaries like China and Russia, counterbalancing U.S. influence in the region. These global powers provided financial and political support to the Maduro regime.

5. Regional Stability and Cohesion: The Venezuelan crisis highlighted tensions between CARICOM's collective principles and the external pressures exerted by powerful actors like the U.S. Divisions within CARICOM underscored the challenges of maintaining regional solidarity amidst conflicting national interests.

6. Opportunities for U.S.-CARICOM Relations: Despite tensions during the Trump era, the post-Trump period offers prospects for collaboration on issues like climate resilience, economic recovery, and security. Strengthening trade agreements, promoting renewable energy, and fostering digital transformation are areas of mutual benefit.

These findings underscore the complexities of inter-American relations during a period marked by political polarization and economic uncertainty. They also highlight the importance of balancing external influences with regional

priorities and fostering multilateral solutions to shared challenges.

The broader implications of U.S. foreign policy during the previous Trump administration highlighted both the vulnerabilities and opportunities in U.S.-CARICOM relations. In this second administration it is hoped that by adopting an approach that prioritizes respect, mutual benefit, and regional stability, the U.S. can rebuild and fortify its relationships with CARICOM states, ensuring a more equitable and sustainable partnership in the years ahead.

REFERENCES

- [1] Britannica: Venezuela. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Venezuela>
- [2] CARICOM: Caribbean Community: Who we are. <https://caricom.org/our-community/who-we-are/>
- [3] Caribbean Community (CARICOM). (n.d.). CARICOM foreign ministers, U.S., and Canadian officials meet ahead of CARICOM summit. <https://caricom.org/caricom-foreign-ministers-u-s-and-canadian-officials-meet-ahead-of-caricom-summit/>
- [4] Do U.S. sanctions on Venezuela work? <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/do-us-sanctions-venezuela-work>
- [5] How U.S. sanctions have affected Venezuela // El País. – 2024. - April 19). <https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-04-19/how-us-sanctions-have-affected-venezuela.html>
- [6] Geopolitical Realignments and the Southern Caribbean Energy Matrix. April, 19, 2022. <https://globalamericans.org/geopolitical-realignments-and-the-southern-caribbean-energy-matrix/>
- [7] MacDonald S.B. Geopolitics in the Caribbean: Changing Waters / In: Cope, Z. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Geopolitics. - Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-47227-5_47
- [8] Rodrigues F. Sanctions, Venezuela's Crisis, and Options for Economic Statecraft. Dec.6, 2021. <https://peacepolicy.nd.edu/2021/12/06/sanctions-venezuelas-crisis-and-options-for-economic-statecraft/>
- [9] U.S. Department of State: U.S. Relations with Venezuela. 2024. 18 July. <https://surl.lu/jkkhry>

АҚШТЫҢ Д.ТРАМП ПРЕЗИДЕНТТІГІ КЕЗІНДЕГІ ВЕНЕСУЕЛА ЖӘНЕ КАРИБ ҚОҒАМДАСТЫҒЫНА (CARICOM) ҚАТЫСТЫ СЫРТҚЫ САЯСАТЫ

*Рагунат Махабир¹, Керон Ганпат²

*¹ Оңтүстік Кариб университеті, Тринидад және Тобаго

² Тринидад және Тобаго университеті, Тринидад және Тобаго

Андатпа. Бұл мақала АҚШ-тың Венесуэла мен Кариб аймағының Қауымдастығына (CARICOM) қатысты сыртқы саясатын, Дональд Трамптың бірінші әкімшілігі (2017-2021) және 2025 жылдың 20 қаңтарында басталған жаңа мерзімін талқылауға бағытталған. Зерттеу АҚШ әрекеттерін қалыптастырған геосаяси стратегия, экономикалық мүдделер

және аймақтық дипломатия арасындағы күрделі байланысты зерделейді. Трамп әкімшілігінің Венесуэлаға қатысты ұстанымы «максималды қысым» науқанына негізделген, бұл экономикалық санкциялар мен дипломатиялық оқшауландыруды, сондай-ақ Николас Мадуроның режимін әлсірету мақсатында оппозиция топтарын қолдауды қамтыды. Бұл саясат демократиялық басқаруды алға жылжытуды мақсат етсе де, Венесуэланың гуманитарлық дағдарысын күшейтті және АҚШ пен CARICOM мүше мемлекеттерінің қарым-қатынасын шиеленістірді.

Мақала CARICOM-ның Венесуэлаға қатысты бөлінген ұстанымын зерттеп, мүше мемлекеттердің қарама-қарсы пікірлерін көрсетеді, олардың кейбіреулері АҚШ саясатын қарсы алса, басқалары оны қолдады. Бұл айырмашылықтар аймақтық бірлікті, яғни ішкі істерге араласпау қағидатын және сыртқы ықпалдардан, әсіресе АҚШ-тан келген қысымдарды көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу АҚШ-тың саясаттарының аймақтық тұрақтылыққа, экономикалық дамуға және көпжақты ынтымақтастыққа әсерін талдайды. Саяси поляризация мен экономикалық белгісіздік кезеңінде, мақала АҚШ-CARICOM қарым-қатынастарының дамуы мен аймақтың болашағы үшін маңызы туралы түсініктер береді.

Тірек сөздер: Трамп, КАРИКОМ, Венесуэла, экономикалық саясат, санкциялар, сыртқы саясат, Николас Мадуро, аймақтық дипломатия

ВНЕШНЯЯ ПОЛИТИКА США В ОТНОШЕНИИ ВЕНЕСУЭЛЫ И КАРИБСКОГО СООБЩЕСТВА (КАРИКОМ) ПРИ ПРЕЗИДЕНТЕ ТРАМПЕ

*Рагхунат Махабир¹, Керон Ганпат²

^{*1}Южно-Карибский университет, Тринидад и Тобаго

² Университет Тринидада и Тобаго, Тринидад и Тобаго

Аннотация. Цель данной работы — проанализировать внешнюю политику США в отношении Венесуэлы и Карибского сообщества (CARICOM) при президенте Дональде Трампе, с акцентом на его первое президентство (2017-2021) и новый срок, начавшийся 20 января 2025 года. Исследование будет сосредоточено на сложных взаимосвязях геополитической стратегии, экономических интересов и региональной дипломатии, которые формировали действия США в регионе. Подход администрации Трампа к Венесуэле характеризовался кампанией «максимального давления», которая включала введение строгих экономических санкций, дипломатическую изоляцию и поддержку оппозиционных групп с целью ослабления режима Николаса Мадуро. Эта политика, направленная на продвижение демократического управления в Венесуэле, однако, усугубила гуманитарный кризис в стране и привела к значительному социальному напряжению, а также создала напряженность в отношениях США с государствами-членами CARICOM.

Работа исследует разделенность CARICOM по вопросу Венесуэлы, подчеркивая контрастные позиции государств-членов, некоторые из которых

выступили против подхода США, в то время как другие поддержали его. Эти различия отражают более широкие напряжения между региональной солидарностью, которая выступает за невмешательство во внутренние дела, и внешними давлениями со стороны крупных держав, таких как США. Кроме того, исследование анализирует, как политика США повлияла на региональную стабильность, экономическое развитие и многостороннее сотрудничество в Карибском регионе. В условиях нарастающей политической поляризации и экономической неопределенности, работа предлагает ценные выводы о развитии отношений США и CARICOM и их последствиях для будущего региона.

Ключевые слова: Трамп, КАРИКОМ, Венесуэла, экономическая политика, санкции, внешняя политика, Николас Мадуро, региональная дипломатия

Information about authors:

Raghnath Mahabir – PhD, Coordinator of the National Security and Intelligence Program, University of the Southern Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, e-mail: mahabir@usc.edu.tt

Keron Ganpat - Instructor in Criminology, University of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago, e-mail: keron.ganpat@utt.edu.tt

Авторлар туралы мәлімет:

Рагунат Махабир - PhD докторы, Ұлттық қауіпсіздік және барлау кафедрасының доценті, Оңтүстік Кариб университеті, Тринидад және Тобаго, e-mail: mahabir@usc.edu.tt

Керон Ганпат - оқытушы, криминалист инструктор, Тринидад және Тобаго университеті, Тринидад және Тобаго, e-mail: keron.ganpat@utt.edu.tt

Сведения об авторах:

Рагхунат Махабир – докторPhD, доцент кафедры национальной безопасности и разведки, Южно-Карибский университет, Тринидад и Тобаго, e-mail: mahabir@usc.edu.tt

Керон Ганпат – преподаватель, инструктор криминологии, Университет Тринидада и Тобаго, Тринидад и Тобаго, e-mail: keron.ganpat@utt.edu.tt

Received: January 12, 2025