

# Three Years of Monroe Doctrine by Trump: What Has Happened in Latin America?

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*Against all mainstream media expectations, **Donald Trump** had defeated **Hillary Clinton** to the presidency of the United States in 2016, and it was expected that the new president would take on a more isolationist policy and withdraw his country from many of the world's hotspots. However, after three years, this has proven to be incorrect with President Trump taking hard-line stance on approach to Latin America, and reviving the [Monroe Doctrine](#).*

The election of **Jair Bolsonaro**, dubbed as the '[Tropical Trump](#),' to the Brazilian Presidency in 2018 meant that Latin America's largest country has been working towards the realignment Brasilia's policies with Washington's interests in the region. It was unsurprising then that Brazil became a key South American country to go against Venezuelan **President Nicolás Maduro**, supporting neoliberal **Mauricio Macri**'s attempt to remain President of Argentina, and opposing Cuba forcing the Caribbean country to withdraw their doctors from helping Brazil's poorest and most vulnerable.

Bolsonaro, who had the backing of the powerful Christian Zionist Evangelical vote just as Trump did, also amended his country's relations with Israel and even attempted to move Brazil's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, before succumbing to pressure from Arab states who buy a large percentage of Brazilian agriculture. Despite Brasilia's realignment with the U.S. and serving its interests in not only Latin America, but even in the Middle East, there was no reward for Brazil as Trump announced his intentions to put tariff's on Brazil's steel industry, maintaining difficult visa requirement for Brazilian citizens despite Bolsonaro eliminating this procedure for American visitors, and not supporting Brazil's admission into the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Meanwhile, under Trump, Washington has expanded the number of Cuban entities affected by the sanctions on three occasions that have been maintained since the success of **Fidel Castro**'s revolution in the 1950's. He also made it extremely difficult for Americans to travel to Cuba by cancelling cruises that travel to the Caribbean country.

Trump believes that by maintaining pressure on Cuba, he is also indirectly pressuring Venezuela too. However, he has also employed other indirect and direct methods to pressurize Venezuela by applying sanctions against the country as early as May 2017 by freezing assets and banning financial transactions in the U.S. against eight members of the Venezuelan Supreme Court. The financial sanctions also expanded, targeting more individuals and key industries. The pressure only increased with U.S. **Secretary of State Mike Pompeo** and **then-Defense Adviser John Bolton**, actively backing support for opposition deputy **Juan Guaidó** on January 23, 2019 as president of Venezuela without any

legal basis. However, these efforts failed with Maduro comfortably remaining in power and Guaidó utterly failing to get any major political or military support in Venezuela despite attempting to conduct a constitutional and military coup.

We of course cannot forget Trump's praise to Colombian **President Iván Duque Márquez**, claiming he was doing a great job by accepting Venezuelan migrants. Really, Trump meant that Duque was making his best to consolidate Colombia's vassal status to the U.S. by strengthening military ties and becoming a center for destabilizing Venezuela and threatening war with the Bolivarian country. The degree of cooperation appeared to be fully exposed in January 2019 when Bolton 'unintentionally' showed a note during a conference that read "5,000 troops to Colombia," although both the U.S. and Colombia quickly denied that American troops were being sent to the South American country.

Although Trump failed to remove Maduro from power through economic, constitutional and military attempts, he did find success in Bolivia where staunch ally of Venezuela and Cuba, **President Evo Morales**, was removed from power through a military coup. The U.S. became the first country to recognize Evangelical [Jeanine Áñez](#) as Bolivia's new president. However, the next elections could potentially end this victory for Washington with strong indications that Morales' party, the Movement for Socialism, will be re-elected in May.

Moving to the southern land border with the U.S., Mexico, it certainly has not worked the way that Trump anticipated despite the heavy emphasis on building a border wall. The idea of building a wall on the southern border with Mexico to prevent "criminals" from entering the country was one of the most controversial points of his platform and, at the same time, one of the points with which he managed to attract the attention of a lot of the U.S. public.

However, financing the wall was one of the biggest headaches for the American leader, since his proposal was systematically rejected by the Democratic Party, which has a majority in the House of Representatives. Of the \$5.7 billion that Trump wanted to use for the wall, he only got authorization for \$1.37 billion. This is also coupled with the fact that Mexico has become one of the main defenders of Evo Morales, Venezuela and other progressive movements in Latin America.

How Trump responds to these continued setbacks in Venezuela, Mexico and Argentina off the back of minor successes in Brazil and Bolivia remains to be seen, especially as he has not achieved a final victory in these countries yet. However, what is certain is that the Monroe Doctrine under Trump is well and truly back despite suggestions that his administration would pursue a policy of withdrawal and isolationism.

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