

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

The paradox of Trump: the 'peacemaker' attacking Venezuela

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This weekend saw the United States move closer to a military attack on Venezuela while also taking a small step towards a negotiated solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. These attitudes appear contradictory, especially given US President Donald Trump's

ambition to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Regarding Ukraine, Secretary of State Marco Rubio met yesterday in Miami with a delegation from Kiev. He stated at the end of the meeting that progress had been made, although "much work remains to be done", particularly since the Russian side is in no hurry to reach a conclusion. However, the day before, President Trump called for 'the airspace above and around Venezuela to be considered completely closed' in a post on the social network Truth, suggesting that some kind of attack is imminent. Over the past two months, the United States has amassed an impressive array of air and naval forces in the Caribbean, including the large aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford. Since September, boats suspected of drug trafficking have been targeted in 21 attacks resulting in 83 deaths, but the presence of drugs has never been confirmed on boats that may simply have been fishing vessels.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for Trump to back down from an attack on Venezuela, even though some Republicans oppose such an escalation and warn that only Congress can declare war. Trump's official reason for making threats is to fight drug trafficking to the United States, with all the serious social and human consequences that this entails. However, as **previously mentioned**, the real motivation is geopolitical: the presence of a resource-rich country with a socialist-style dictatorial government and dangerous alliances with Russia, China and Iran in its own backyard. It is no coincidence that Trump is explicitly aiming for regime change in Caracas and the removal of President Nicolás Maduro — a goal he also pursued during his first term with less drastic means after the strongly contested 2018 Venezuelan elections.

However, we will not dwell on the details of the relationship between the United States and the Caracas government, or the possible outcome of any military action. Instead, we will address the apparent paradox of a president who wants to be remembered as the 'great peacemaker', the man who ends armed conflicts — the president who has 'ended seven wars' — and yet declares war on another country. How can this be explained?

Although Trump's approach to international relations is unsettling and his statements and actions are unpredictable and confusing, there is a common theme in his foreign policy initiatives: the belief that the world is now multipolar and that the boundaries of the various powers must be adjusted to create a balance that allows the United States to guarantee its security and continue to prosper. Consequently, the United States should not expend energy on distant conflicts (e.g. Ukraine) or wars that could damage its interests (e.g. the Middle East).

This is the logic of spheres of influence, whereby major powers seek to exert power over other states by subordinating them to their own national interests. This is certainly not a new phenomenon. With the end of the Cold War, it was thought that the era of spheres of influence was over. However, this was an illusion; the great powers and those aspiring to be such have always sought to maintain or build their own spheres of influence. This explains many of the wars of the last 35 years, from the Balkans to Libya and the Middle East, with the clash between Sunnis and Shiites. This culminated in the invasion of Ukraine and the clash between Russia and NATO. It is no coincidence that, in US-Russia talks to reach a peace agreement, the Ukraine chapter is just one among many.

Trump is therefore trying to find a global agreement that obviously includes the untouchability of the entire American continent by other powers, which he considers to be his own. This is why he is now taking a tough stance with the current Venezuelan government (which, incidentally, is recognised by only around 50 countries following its disputed victory in the 2024 elections). For Trump, peace is clearly not the goal, but a means to 'make America great'; therefore, it can be sacrificed if war is more effective in achieving the real goal.

While there is no need to be scandalised by the existence of spheres of influence, there are different ways of promoting and exercising this influence. It is one thing to provide economic aid that allows other countries to develop and grow together, as with the American Marshall Plan for Europe after the Second World War. It is quite another to 'buy' poor countries in order to rob them of their resources, as China does in Africa. It is yet another thing entirely to invade countries that are considered an integral part of one's own area of dominance. Clearly, the latter two methods cannot be considered acceptable.

Moreover, if this path continues, an American attack on Venezuela after the invasion of Ukraine would pave the way, at least in terms of legitimacy, for the invasion of Taiwan

by the People's Republic of China. This would not only be unjust and unacceptable, it would also not create order, but probably lead to further conflicts with other countries in the region concerned about China's aggressiveness.

The path to a new balance of power must not involve violating national sovereignty (including within the European Union) or circumventing international law. Instead, it must reconcile interests while respecting the dignity of all parties involved.