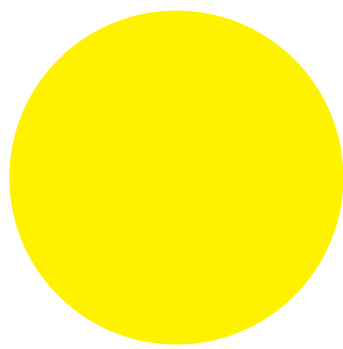


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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) presents the draft budget bill to the next fiscal year to Parliament Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf during a visit to the legislature in Tehran on December 23, 2025.
• khabaronline.ir

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A Palestinian man carries the body of his 5-month-old brother, Ahmed Al-Nader, who was killed the previous day along with other family members in an Israeli shelling on a school-turned-shelter in the Tuffah neighborhood of Gaza City on December 20, 2025.
• AFP



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US Venezuela policy, a Monroe Doctrine redux with China, Russia in focus

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW



Jahanbakhsh Izadi

Tensions between the United States and Venezuela have dramatically escalated. Besides sweeping sanctions, US President Donald Trump has ordered a complete blockade of oil tankers related to Venezuela and has largely expanded the presence of the US Navy and Coast Guard in the Caribbean. Those actions are allegedly linked with the fight against drug trafficking and allegations of "narco-terrorism." While a direct military confrontation is not currently underway, the risk of escalation remains, with regional and global actors seeking diplomatic solutions. The key question is what motives are at play. Jahanbakhsh Izadi, an expert on South America affairs, told Iran Daily that US actions were rooted in the same Monroe Doctrine, now aimed at eliminating the influence of rivals such as China and Russia from South America, with the drug issue highlighted to serve that broader objective.

IRAN DAILY: How can the tense relationship between the United States and Venezuela be analyzed within the broader framework of Washington's policies toward Latin America?

IZADI: When all US activities and policies toward Venezuela are taken together—along with potential future cases in Latin America—it becomes clear that this policy is a continuation of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. The underlying assumption in Washington is that the Western Hemisphere constitutes its backyard, and that the entry of other actors—particularly international rivals—into the region poses specific threats to US interests. From this perspective, the measures taken over the past month or two are anchored in that doctrine, but with notable differences from the past. Originally, the Monroe Doctrine had two pillars: first, that European powers should not interfere in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere or South America; and second, that the United States would refrain from interfering in European affairs. Today, European involvement is no longer seen as problematic. The focus has instead shifted toward China, especially given its extensive economic, technological, and energy ties with Latin American countries, as well as Russia, which to some extent is viewed as a potentially disruptive actor with a limited military footprint in the region. Accordingly, these activities are interpreted within that framework, regardless of the pretext used.

How do you assess the role of oil in the American overall policy toward Venezuela? Is the United States seeking control over Venezuela's oil resources?

Undoubtedly, energy in general—and oil in particular—continues to play a role in US policy as long as fossil fuels remain dominant and energy equations retain their global significance. Moreover, some of these dynamics are driven by US energy companies and resources that help shape such policies, and these factors cannot be ignored. Yet, following the shale oil and shale gas boom in the United States, America's own energy calculus has changed. The United States appears less concerned with meeting its own energy needs than with managing global energy flows.

Take the Persian Gulf as an example: most of its oil is destined for Asian countries such as South Korea, Japan, India, and China. Within the framework of global capitalism, the United States seeks to preserve its dominance and leverage over key energy hubs—both sources of production and international corridors—to pursue its political and strategic objectives through energy as a tool.

To what extent are allegations of "narco-terrorism" and the linking of sanctions to the fight against drug trafficking political, and to what extent are they grounded in reality?

To claim that narco-terrorism has no significance in the region would be inaccurate. However, the notion that this issue is what has genuinely driven US involvement in the current crisis does not appear convincing. According to some estimates, perhaps around 15% of drugs entering the US may be linked to Venezuela, 80% come from other sources.

As such, the focus on Venezuela as a primary hub for drug inflows into the United States appears to be a pretext. This issue has been highlighted largely to rally public opinion in support of US policies or of Trump himself. Broadly speaking, US strategy toward Latin America often involves playing up such themes, either by creating them or, where they do exist, by blowing them out of proportion.

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