



CIPRIANI COLLEGE
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES

**DIPLOMACY: ARCHAIC STATECRAFT
OR CONTEMPORARY GAME CHANGER?**

WORK MATTERS

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Diplomacy: Archaic Statecraft or Contemporary Game Changer?

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The ongoing tension between Venezuela and the United States has undoubtedly become a grave concern for citizens, academics, thought leaders and the wider Caribbean Region alike. The matter has not only garnered significant attention within local media outlets, but has propelled itself to the level of broader regional and international concern. Following the brazen large-scale attacks carried out by the Trump administration which resulted in the capture and indictment of President Nicolas Maduro, the situation has become evermore volatile and alarming.

In this regard, the United States not only skirted the guiding principles of international law, specifically the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of another state as well as respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. Moreover, Trinidad and Tobago, given their strategic geographic location and its overlapping national interests and priorities, have been caught within the crux of the matter. In this regard, the actions and response of the government of Trinidad and Tobago, in response to the heightened tensions, has brought into question the contemporary relevancy and utility of diplomacy and peaceful negotiations and resolution and whether these methods of managing international relations still hold any weight when dealing with complex international affairs

Within the context of the western hemisphere, the shift in the balance of power has become ever more salient. The contemporary revitalization and invocation of a 19th century US policy, the Monroe Doctrine, first enacted by US President James Monroe in 1823 with the aim of consolidating the Western Hemisphere as the US backyard and restricting any influence from external powers within the region, to its Trump corollary iteration, i.e. the 'Donroe Doctrine' has significant implications for hemispheric peace and

stability. It is under the pretext of this reinvigorated 'Donroe Doctrine', which seeks to challenge Russian and Chinese influence in the Western Hemisphere, that the US has justified its abduction of sitting Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro. In this vein, the US seeks to expand its authority both regionally and internationally, with Greenland and its valuable mineral resources being touted as the next target for the Trump administration.

Against the background of this brewing international quagmire, the role of diplomacy is now placed under a scrutinizing microscope. These events undoubtedly compel us to critically reflect on whether diplomacy still maintains prominence and importance within the convoluted international relations landscape. It forces us to question whether the more powerful players within the international system, in this context, the United States, are equipped with a different arsenal of tools to choose from as it relates to the manner in which they seek to consolidate their dominance, thereby rendering diplomacy archaic and unfit for purpose of power accumulation and instead, prioritizing hard power strategies which focus on military prowess and economic muscle.

Moreover, taking into account the unchecked nature of recent US actions, it brings into context a meaningful quote from George Orwell's classic novel *Animal Farm* which states that "All animals are equal but some are more equal than others." When juxtaposed with the current state of regional and international affairs, this quote not only allows us to assess the lack of enforceability of international law but also the anarchy of the international system wherein there exists no overarching authority to strictly enforce a rules-based international order. It seems as though there may be a different set of rules which apply to the more potent players within the international system, thereby allowing them to

circumvent the consequences of their unilateral actions and further compounding the need for a reevaluation of the international legal architecture and institutions.

Ultimately, while diplomacy may not be the pragmatic first choice for some based on differences in resource endowment, it can still be applied as a contemporary game changer for others. Small nations, like those which inundate the Caribbean region and are characterized by small economies, small populations and physical vulnerabilities, must develop issue-specific power to compensate for what they lack in aggregate structural power. Thus, in their unique context, by strategically leveraging diplomatic approaches such as coalition building and prioritization of integral policy sectors, these nations can not only foster peaceful and mutually beneficial relations but contribute to hemispheric peace and security through dialogue and discussion rooted in the proper channels and respect for international law. This will bode well for their sustainable growth and development, especially in an international climate defined by unpredictability and multipolarity.