

Jorge Heine: Donroe Doctrine - Subversion of Latin America

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#Glenn

Welcome back to the program. We're here with the former ambassador of Chile to China, India, and South Africa—so yes, the Chilean ambassador to the BRICS countries. I'm very honored that you've joined the program today to discuss what this attack by the United States actually means for Latin America and, for that matter, Asia. Thank you for coming on the program. Thank you, thank you for the opportunity. So, we see that Donald Trump—or rather, the White House—tweeted this picture of Trump with the text "This is our hemisphere," which seems to indicate the motivation behind all of this. How are you assessing it, though? Is this simply about dominating the hemisphere, or what are the main motivations of the United States behind this attack on Venezuela?

#Jorge Heine

Well, let me say this. Over the long history of U.S.–Latin American relations, there have been, of course, many U.S. interventions in various forms across the region. But what happened in Venezuela on Saturday is really breaking new ground. Why do I say this? This is the first time we've seen a U. S. military attack on the South American mainland. We had seen those kinds of actions previously in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, but not on the South American mainland. So a threshold has been crossed, and we are in uncharted waters. And without missing a beat, at the press conference on Saturday, President Trump warned Colombia and Mexico that they might be next. And Secretary of State Rubio, in turn, warned Cuba to watch out.

So this is not a one-off, as, for example, the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989 was. This may be the beginning of something else. And not only that, but as you quite rightly said, Mr. Trump came up in November with the new U.S. National Security Doctrine 2025, in which he puts the Western Hemisphere front and center. This is a significant change from previous presidents. President George

W. Bush, of course, put the Middle East front and center with his global war on terror. President Obama, with his pivot to Asia, put China front and center. And President Trump is putting the Americas front and center. Now, you might think that, you know, for the United States to give priority to Latin America would be a good thing. Latin America has been going through some severe difficulties.

It had the biggest economic downturn in 120 years in 2020. It was the region most severely impacted by the pandemic, with 8% of the world's population, yet Latin America had 28% of the world's fatalities from it. And it hasn't really been able to recover from that. So the region is in bad shape—bad shape. You would think that U.S. interest might help the region get out of this very difficult situation. But what we see, both in the document and in the actions of Mr. Trump, is that this is not about helping Latin America overcome its difficulties. It's about subjugating Latin America—extracting its resources, dominating its people and its governments, and basically putting it under the U.S. thumb. And that, of course, is something I think will not work. But in the short term, that seems to be what's being done.

#Glenn

Well, Latin America, though, over the past 20 years has changed a lot as well. It used to be that the United States was the main trading partner. Now we see it's shifted to China—like most of the world, I would say. But the problem for the United States is that it can't really compete with China anymore. So there's this incentive to instead use military force as a kind of new mercantilism. But how will this change the dynamic across Latin America? Because, again, it's not a unified region. Some countries align more closely with the United States, while others are more hesitant. Or is it simply that, well, many countries didn't care much for Maduro, but this isn't really about one country's leader?

The story is much bigger here. It's the United States, as you said, trying to subjugate Latin America—or now South America as well—in an effort to, I guess, shore up the whole Western Hemisphere in preparation for this multipolar world order, to make sure that other great powers aren't even allowed to have equal opportunities there. Some people refer to it as a Monroe Doctrine, but others have called it a "Dunrow Doctrine" instead. This is not the Monroe Doctrine, which was supposed to prevent empires; this is the U.S. asserting its empire. But how do you see this? Are there big dividing lines across South America, or do you think this will unite countries?

#Jorge Heine

Well, there are big dividing lines in South America and in the rest of Latin America. There's no doubt the region is fragmented. You know, there is a collective entity that's supposed to represent Latin America—it's called CELAC, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. But it's very weak. It's very difficult to reach any agreement. One would think that something as brazen as an attack that bombs a capital of three million people like Caracas, and kidnaps the president and his

wife, would lead to a unanimous condemnation. But it hasn't. The fact is, there are governments in Latin America—I mentioned the governments of Argentina, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Costa Rica—that side quite openly with the government of the United States and the government of Mr. Trump.

Now, you quite rightly said that Mr. Maduro did not evoke a lot of sympathy in the region, for reasons we all know. It was an authoritarian government; it was also an incompetent one. You have this extraordinary situation in which a country that has one-fifth of all the world's oil reserves yet faces economic difficulties. How can that be? You know, there's something very absurd about it—but that's what happened. So that obviously weakened Mr. Maduro's hand considerably, as well as the fact that the 2024 elections were basically, you know, stolen by him. None of that helped. But the basic point is this: there's an attempt here to sort of recreate the days of empire and colonialism.

The attempt to assert dominance in the Western Hemisphere by the Trump administration is something we hadn't seen in a very long time. And that, it seems to me, will evoke a lot more resistance than we've seen until now. You know, again, the Venezuelan opposition thought they would be called to move into the presidential palace and start ruling the country once Mr. Maduro was ejected from power. But that didn't happen. Mr. Trump dismissed the case of Ms. María Corina Machado, saying she doesn't have the respect of the Venezuelan people. And he will continue to work—Mr. Trump will continue to work—with Mr. Maduro's vice president, Delcy Rodríguez. So we have an extraordinarily awkward situation in Venezuela right now, in which basically, you know, the Maduro regime continues without him.

#Glenn

Do you think, or would you predict, that this will fuel anti-American sentiment across the region, regardless of the governments? I mean, of course, you're the ambassador of Chile, a country that had its own American intervention back on September 11, 1973, when Allende was removed. So, how do you think this will play out among the wider population across South America?

#Jorge Heine

Yeah. Across Latin America, the fact that Mr. Maduro trampled on democracy and on human rights was a major card that was used and played against him. But as it happens, as you may recall, at the Saturday press conference in Mar-a-Lago, there was no mention of democracy or human rights. What we're seeing in Venezuela is all about grabbing the Venezuelan oil. Mr. Trump said that the Venezuelan oil industry was built by the United States and that the United States will now take it back. Now, will that happen in other countries as well? The National Security Document of the United States, 2025, states quite clearly that the United States is keen to get its hands on the region's natural resources. You know, South America in particular is a region very rich in natural resources. So will we see this in other countries as well? Obviously, the reaction against it will be very strong.

#Glenn

Yeah, this whole focus on the character of President Maduro seems like a big distraction, because that's not the point. The point is, irrespective of whether someone likes the leader or not—whether it's authoritarian or democratic—the idea that one can just invade a country and strip it of its natural resources, if one can smear its leaders enough, is kind of... You would think that Latin America would take a warning from the European case, because in Europe they do what they always do: they bow to the United States, hoping their obedience will be rewarded. But this is also why the Europeans don't want to condemn what the United States did. Indeed, the EU leaders only focused on what they consider to be the illegitimacy of Maduro. But their obedience is not rewarded.

It's seen as a weakness and an invitation. Immediately afterward, Donald Trump began talking about taking Greenland, and it appears this goes beyond mere rhetoric—that this will likely be the next target. But again, for Latin America, as you said, Marco Rubio seems very intent on going after Cuba. You have Trump making threats against Colombia and Mexico. Last year, he, of course, threatened to take the Panama Canal, but he was bought off with some benefits. Still, he might come back again for the Panama Canal. So isn't this, I guess, the erosion of international law and stability, and the rejection of sovereignty—or at least the demand for limited sovereignty—for South America? Isn't this something that would, I guess, shape new alliances or create entirely new realities that politicians should react to?

#Jorge Heine

Yes, absolutely. And let me say the following. You mentioned the case of Europe. I must say I am stunned by the bland and very timid reaction of Europe and European nations to what has happened in Venezuela. I was watching the meeting of the United Nations Security Council yesterday, and the remarks made by the United Kingdom's ambassador to the UN, the permanent representative, were extraordinary—very bland, really not condemning this action at all. And this was a country, the United Kingdom, that used to stand for international law, for respecting the multilateral order. It was one of the pillars of the United Nations when it was set up.

And here it is, essentially acquiescing to what has been happening in Latin America. The notion is, I guess, "Well, this is very far away; we shouldn't be concerned with it." But, well... you know, the chickens will come home to roost. Now, Stephen Miller, an aide to Mr. Trump—the top aide, the deputy chief of staff—speaks of taking Greenland. So, you know, if you don't stand up for others when you have a chance to do so, they will come after you. And this is what we are seeing today. Let me emphasize the following, Glenn. You may have seen my new book, **The Non-Aligned World**, in which we make the case for what we call, with my colleagues Carlos Portillo and Carlos Ominami, active non-alignment.

Countries in the Global South should put their own interests front and center, not let themselves be pressured or cajoled by the great powers, and make decisions along those lines. This is an approach

that takes a page from the Non-Aligned Movement of the '50s and '60s but adapts it to the realities of the new century. And we are seeing it in practice. The best example of that is Brazil under President Lula. In early July, we had an extraordinary example of this: Mr. Trump pressured Brazil to end the prosecution of former President Bolsonaro, who was involved in an attempted military coup in Brazil in January 2023 and had to stand trial for it.

And he's a friend of Mr. Trump, and Trump said that trial should be suspended. President Lula said, "We are not going to do that. Brazil is a sovereign country. We will let the judiciary do what it has to do. We will not let ourselves be pressured." The United States imposed 50% tariffs on Brazilian exports to the U.S. Many people thought that would lead Brazil to give in. It did not. And in the end, in this face-off with the United States, because the price of coffee and beef went up so much in the U.S., the U.S. had to give in. And Brazil won because it stood its ground. This is what active non-alignment is all about.

More or less at the same time, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen got on a plane to visit Mr. Trump at his golf course in Scotland—something I had never seen before, a meeting with a head of state at his private golf course—and reached an agreement in which the EU essentially gave up. In this trade deal they signed with the U.S., the United States imposed 15% tariffs on European goods going to the U.S., and there was a commitment on the part of the EU to buy, I think, \$600 billion worth of energy products from the U.S. and \$750 billion in defense products, with no tariffs on U.S. products going to the EU. So, essentially, a capitulation. Obviously, the European Union is a much bigger economy and a stronger party than Brazil. But it caved. Brazil did not. And I think there's a lesson there for all those who want to see it.

#Glenn

Yeah, making a deal even worse with the EU on Trump's golf course was that even the EU recognized it was a terrible deal. Buying all this American energy and weapons—whatever profit remained for the EU—would have to be reinvested in the United States. I mean, it's an awful deal, and the EU knew it. But the logic was, yes, it's a horrible thing, but this isn't only about trade. That was the argument: we have to keep the Americans interested in Europe. And this also seems to be part of the response to what happened in Venezuela—basically, let's just keep Trump happy and wait him out.

Eventually, we'll get another Biden coming along, or Kamala Harris, and then everything will go back to normal. But I don't think this is just about Trump—of course, Trump is a unique character, but this is not only about him. We have to remember that, for the Europeans, they make it sound like the U.S. annexing Greenland would be completely out of character. But under Biden, the United States blew up Europe's energy infrastructure. And when our industries began to suffer, they offered subsidies for those industries to move to the U.S. So it's not only about individuals, it seems. I think it's about the wider, new international distribution of power.

That is, the U.S. doesn't have the wealth—the relative wealth—it had before. The U.S. was very generous to the Europeans after World War II with trade deals and all that, but it's simply not in a position to do so anymore. It will rely more on military force, and it will have a more extractive relationship, I think, with allies—seeking essentially a return on investment for its empire. So it is... I think it's a massive miscalculation to just stand down and hope that the Americans will treat you nicely, because I think Trump especially will just see weakness, which could be taken advantage of.

#Jorge Heine

That's right. If I can say something on that—it also doesn't work. I remember the explanation that was given, sotto voce, by Europeans who participated in this trade deal. It was, "Well, we have to keep in mind what you just said—the larger strategic context." By that, of course, they meant Ukraine. The idea was that by giving in on the trade deal, we'd get the United States to side with us on what we wanted in Ukraine. Well, that hasn't worked out either. Trump has kept his position on Ukraine, which is very skeptical of Ukraine and much more friendly toward Russia. So you give in, hoping that somehow you'll be better off. The lesson we must draw from it is that it doesn't work that way. When Trump sees weakness, he'll keep pushing.

#Glenn

The shocking part is that this, of course, happens in the absence of any diplomacy. I mean, the U.S. is in a weakened position, but nobody wants the U.S. to fail or go through a massive crisis, because then, of course, it would—well, it's not great for the Americans, but it's also not good in terms of how they would react. But given that you have this massive shift in the distribution of power, it's very strange that there aren't more diplomatic efforts to try to find a new status quo in which the U.S. would also find an acceptable or stable position for itself. Absolutely. But one effort to facilitate a stable multipolar world has been BRICS. And as I mentioned earlier, you've been the ambassador to India, China, and South Africa—you're just missing Brazil and Russia, then you'd have all five. How do you see this being a Trump attack on BRICS?

#Jorge Heine

Because the—well, we've seen how Mr. Trump has attacked South Africa very strongly and taken all sorts of measures against it on trade and diplomacy. The United States did not take part in the G20 meetings held in South Africa in 2025. And now he's saying something that is very questionable from a strictly diplomatic point of view—that he will exclude South Africa from participating in the G20 meetings in the United States. This year, the United States will chair the G20. He has also, of course, taken on Brazil, as I mentioned earlier. And, amazingly, he's also taken on India, imposing 50% tariffs on Indian goods and taking other measures, like restrictions on H-1B visas, that mainly affect Indian citizens. So here you have three of the main BRICS countries being targeted by the United States.

Obviously, BRICS is seen as a threat to U.S. dominance and hegemony, and therefore BRICS is not very popular in Washington—particularly not with Mr. Trump. But I will say this: what we're seeing is the emergence of BRICS as a major player. There used to be five members; now there are ten. Indonesia joined—the fourth-largest country in the world, the largest Muslim-majority country in the world. The BRICS countries have their own bank, the New Development Bank. It was set up when I was in Beijing, established in Shanghai with \$50 billion of capital. So the BRICS have come into their own as a very significant force in world politics. What's extraordinary is that for a long time, Western media basically ignored the existence of BRICS, dismissing it as a talking shop that talked quite a bit but didn't really undertake any actions.

But that, of course, is changing. We're seeing, with the New Development Bank and other actions taken by the BRICS group, that it's becoming a very significant reference point in international affairs. Now, what's important to underscore here, Glenn, is this. I'm often asked this question: obviously, BRICS is not a forum of the Global South. Neither China nor Russia are part of the Global South, I would argue—although, of course, Brazil, South Africa, and India are, as is Indonesia and some of the other recent members. But it is a forum for the Global South, because it espouses the demands of the Global South in a way that, say, the G7 certainly does not.

So, at a time when the Global South has emerged with particular force in world affairs, we've seen this after the war in Ukraine—after the Russian invasion of Ukraine—when many countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America took a position different from the one taken by NATO, by Washington, by Brussels. We've seen it again in the case of the war in Gaza, which has elicited a very strong reaction among countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America because of the connivance of the United States and Europe in the genocidal war waged by Israel in Gaza. The expansion of the BRICS group is a reflection of that rise of the Global South. And, to go back to the point I made earlier, the argument we've been making for five years now in various books and other publications about active non-alignment is precisely that the natural foreign policy for the Global South is active non-alignment.

And there is an approach that, yes, takes some of the elements of the non-alignment movement of the 20th century, but adapts them to the realities of the new century—in which we have the two Asian giants, China and India, and these new multilateral development banks like the New Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the Latin American Development Bank. This is a world in which more than 50% of world trade is in the Global South—south-south trade—as opposed to the 20% it was in the 1970s. So it's a whole new world in which the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America have come into their own and are really exercising a very significant presence in world affairs.

#Glenn

Well, what I found interesting about the attack on Venezuela is the background and the context. It really encapsulates the situation in the world right now because, to a large extent, it's about the rise of Asia—which is what makes the United States quite worried, especially in the Western Hemisphere.

But it's also a story, as we've seen with the West, of relative decline and fragmentation. And that kind of characterizes, I guess, the main challenges of the current world order: this massive shift of power from West to East, which also results in the political West fragmenting. I've always made the point that the political West, as an entity, hasn't really found a way to adjust to a post-hegemonic position.

That's a place where it doesn't dominate anymore. And I think this is a key problem, which is why there are also some acts of desperation. But how do you see China playing into this? Because they've become quite dependent on Latin America as a trading partner. South America is rich in natural resources. So, is this an effort to sell oil to the Chinese in dollars to boost the petrodollar, or is it an effort to cut off Chinese trade? How central do you think China is in the Americans' calculation?

#Jorge Heine

Well, I think it's very central. Basically, what the United States has been trying to do over the past decade or so is exclude China from the Western Hemisphere. The United States doesn't like the Chinese presence in the Americas and is doing its level best to push it out. And what this national security document says—well, it says in so many words—that the United States should attempt, I'm paraphrasing here, to expel all extra-hemispheric companies that are building infrastructure in Latin America. I mean, that's an untenable proposition, you know—saying, "Let's keep Latin America underdeveloped, and anyone who wants to contribute to Latin American development but isn't American should be expelled."

Now, the point, Glenn, is this. What we have is a situation—going back to my earlier point about active non-alignment—we have a situation that, in some ways, is comparable to the Cold War. In that sense, we have this great power competition between the United States and China, just as we did in the 20th century between the United States and the Soviet Union. This competition is, to some extent, ideological, but it's mostly economic and geopolitical. The key difference between what happened in the Cold War and what's happening now—and this is what makes active non-alignment possible—is this.

The Soviet Union was a superpower—a military superpower, a space power, a nuclear power, an ideological power. But it wasn't a significant economic power. It was a closed economy, smaller than the United States economy. Therefore, it couldn't compete with the United States in terms of trade, investment, or financial flows. On the other hand, China is in a very different position. The Chinese economy is smaller than the U.S. economy, and certainly China is weaker in terms of military power. But in some ways, it's a more open economy than that of the U.S. It signs free trade agreements.

It is ready to open its markets to other economies and contributes through financial flows and investment across the world. This means there's pretty much a level playing field between the United States and China in this great power competition. Therefore, countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have the opportunity to do what we call "play the field." That is, if you have a

particular project, you can check whether the United States makes a better offer or China does. Then you pick and choose, and you hedge your bets. That's what countries in Latin America have been doing—that's what Brazil, Ecuador, and others have been doing. So that is very much the way forward.

#Glenn

Well, that's a key and important argument about multipolarity. This is why the development of a multipolar world is very attractive to many countries around the world. Small and medium-sized countries have a greater opportunity to prosper and to have more political autonomy. If there are many centers of power, then one doesn't have to align with anyone. And it's important, I think, what you said—that the Soviet Union was not an economic power in the same regard, because the U.S. was the main economic center of power, even more so after the Cold War, which meant it was the only game in town. That reduces the incentive to actually diversify.

And if you don't diversify your economic ties, if you end up stuck in an asymmetrical, interdependent relationship where you depend too much on the U.S. while the U.S. isn't very dependent on you, that always results in extracting economic and political concessions. You'd think that another lesson Latin America should take from Europe is that, as we saw the rest of the world seeking to diversify to gain more prosperity and political autonomy, the Europeans went exactly the other way. They wanted to essentially revive the unipolar moment and lock in the U.S. position in Europe. And the way they did this was basically by doing what they were told. So, with the Americans, they said, "Well, Europe has to cut itself off from Russia, cut itself off from China, even to some extent from India, with the tariffs."

Then they went along with it. So they developed this excessive dependence on the United States. And then, of course, the U.S. couldn't extract as many concessions as they wanted, as you mentioned, with that humiliating economic deal in the Gulf. So Europe is now left economically weaker and politically irrelevant, and it will begin to fragment. Essentially, this is a consequence of not doing what they should have done. When there's a multipolar distribution of power, states should diversify their economic partnerships. Europe did the opposite. But I guess the challenge for South America, though, is that if the United States is willing to use military force, how will this not impede the ability to diversify?

#Jorge Heine

Well, I think that's a very good point. Obviously, the United States did what it did in Venezuela and is now threatening to do the same in a number of other countries. But this is not something that's tenable in the medium or long term. And to your point about diversification — for most of Latin America's history, the first 180 years of independent life, the region depended basically on two

diplomatic, trade, and investment poles. One of them was the United States, and the other was a group of European countries. In the new century, with the rise of China, suddenly there is a third reference point.

Now, in international relations, as you quite rightly say, it's always better to have more rather than fewer partners. So for South America—not for Latin America as a whole, but for South America—China is today the number one trading partner. It's the same for Brazil, for Chile, for Peru, for Uruguay. Brazil trades about \$180 billion with China every year. That's an enormous amount of money, and it runs a surplus. Chile, my own country, has bilateral trade of about \$60 billion a year, and it runs a surplus as well. Now, this isn't something that can be changed from one day to the next.

Even if governments want to, they're subjected to pressure from Washington. What are you going to do? Are you going to, I don't know, tell your farmers not to plant soybeans? What would Chile do with its copper? You know, about half of our exports go to China. Who are you going to sell it to? To Bolivia? To Paraguay? The United States isn't buying those amounts. So it's too late, Glenn. The horse has left the barn. The efforts to expel China from Latin America aren't going anywhere. That's not going to happen. Now, you may kidnap a president here, you may bomb a capital there, but those economic trends, those economic undercurrents, are here to stay.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, I agree. And of course, as we just discussed, the introduction of military force rarely results in the success it was intended to achieve. Quite often it has this negative blowback, with the country turning against the United States. But that's a good point, yeah. You can't prevent that—no matter who sits on the throne in Venezuela or Chile, or who's in government, it doesn't really change the structure of the economy. I think the farmers will still grow food and sell it. But just as a last question, what do you think would be the long-term political and economic consequences of this new development that's not just going after Venezuela but threatening the wider region?

#Jorge Heine

Yes, I'll say this: what the United States has been doing, I think, will be very counterproductive. It may achieve some short-term effects in terms of its foreign policy priorities, but in the long term, I think it's really going to weaken its position. The whole notion of the "community of the Americas," the idea of the Americas itself, is being questioned. You know, a lot of people have often said there's no such thing as "the Americas." You have Latin America on one hand, and then you have the United States on the other. And what happened in Venezuela on Saturday reinforces that notion—that there's no such thing as a community of the Americas.

And that, of course, in the end, causes severe damage to U.S. standing. It reinforces the notion that the United States is unpredictable—you don't know what to expect when there's a change of

government in Washington, when a new president comes in. China, on the other hand, provides stability, continuity, and predictability. And as you know very well, in diplomacy and in managing international relations, those are very important features. You want to know where you stand. So I would argue that what happened in Venezuela on Saturday will cause long-term damage to the United States' standing in the region and will end up, paradoxically, favoring China's position there.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, that's a great point, because out of Washington this is sold as a massive victory and a show of strength. But you can very confidently argue that it's also a display of weakness—the fact that one has to send in the military, kill citizens of Venezuela in order to kidnap its president, hoping to shift its economic policies and political loyalties, especially when going after a small to medium-sized country. This is essentially what a declining empire would do as a show of strength. So it could just as well be an indication of further weakness, which, of course, will be perpetuated as the backlash comes. Do you have any final thoughts before we wrap up?

#Jorge Heine

Yes, well, let me just say that, you know, as someone who has worn two hats—one in academia and another in government—I think the notion that my colleagues and I have put forward, in terms of active non-alignment, which addresses the question of what we should actually do in foreign policy, provides a very good handle, a guide to action, a compass to steer our countries in Latin America, but also in Africa and Asia, through the troubled waters of this very turbulent world.

#Glenn

Active non-alignment, yeah. Thank you so much for taking the time. I'll leave a link to your work in the description. Thanks again.

#Jorge Heine

Please do. Thank you for the opportunity.

#Jorge Heine

Have a good evening. Bye-bye.