



U.S. Intervention in Venezuela and its Multidimensional Impacts on Caribbean Small States: Energy, Migration, and Regional Stability

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Abstract

Venezuela's prolonged political and economic crisis has generated significant regional repercussions, particularly for Caribbean small island states. While internal governance failures have contributed to the situation, substantial evidence indicates that U.S. foreign policy, through economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and regime-change strategies, has exacerbated instability and weakened state institutions. This study employs a qualitative research design, integrating document analysis, policy review, and regional case studies to examine the role of U.S. intervention in Venezuela and its multidimensional impacts on Caribbean states. The findings reveal that Caribbean nations face heightened energy insecurity due to the collapse of PetroCaribe, increased migration pressures, constrained foreign policy autonomy, and amplified regional security risks. These effects highlight the vulnerability of small states to asymmetric power dynamics and underscore the interconnectedness of economic, humanitarian, and geopolitical challenges. The current study further identifies gaps in regional coordination and institutional capacity that limit Caribbean states' ability to respond effectively. Policy recommendations emphasise energy diversification, migration management, strengthened multilateral institutions, and enhanced regional cooperation to mitigate spillover effects. By centring the experiences of Caribbean states, the research contributes to a nuanced understanding of how external interventions in one country reverberate across a region, offering lessons for sovereignty, resilience, and sustainable development.

Keywords: Venezuela crisis, U.S. intervention, Caribbean, energy security, migration, regional stability.

Introduction

Venezuela's prolonged political and economic crisis has emerged as one of the most consequential geopolitical issues in the Western Hemisphere. Although internal governance failures, institutional breakdown, and financial mismanagement have contributed to the crisis, a substantial body of scholarship argues that United States foreign policy has actively intensified

Venezuela's destabilization (Gill & Brown, 2020; Hoppenbrouwers, 2021; Luber, 2020; McCoy & Smith, 1995; Mijares, 2025; Marshall, 2021; Mijares, 2025; Seawright, 2012). Economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and explicit regime-change strategies have constrained state capacity and exacerbated humanitarian conditions (Weisbrot & Sachs, 2019). These interventions did not occur in isolation but were embedded in a broader history of U.S. involvement in Latin America (Jones, 2011; Marshall, 2016). Scholars note that such interventions reflect enduring patterns of hegemonic influence, justified through security and democracy-promotion narratives (Biegon, 2020; Grandin, 2010; Huberman & Duarte Amaral, 2025). Venezuela's crisis must therefore be understood as both a domestic and externally mediated phenomenon. This duality is essential for analysing the broader regional consequences of Venezuela's destabilisation.

The United States has increasingly relied on economic sanctions as a central instrument of foreign policy toward Venezuela. Sanctions targeting the oil sector, financial institutions, and state-owned enterprises have significantly reduced government revenue and access to international markets (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2021). While sanctions are often framed as tools to promote democratic accountability, empirical studies suggest they disproportionately harm civilian populations rather than political elites (Pape, 1997; Weisbrot & Sachs, 2019). In Venezuela, sanctions have contributed to food shortages, deterioration of energy infrastructure, and other hardships. These outcomes have intensified social dislocation and economic collapse, further destabilising the state. Critics argue that sanctions function less as corrective mechanisms and more as instruments of economic coercion. This raises ethical and political questions about their legitimacy and regional consequences.

Beyond economic measures, U.S. policy toward Venezuela has included diplomatic isolation and symbolic delegitimation. The recognition of alternative leadership structures and the marginalisation of existing state institutions have undermined Venezuela's sovereignty in international forums (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Such actions reflect broader regime-change paradigms historically applied across Latin America. Diplomatic pressure has also constrained regional organisations' ability to pursue negotiated or non-interventionist solutions. Caribbean states, many of which advocated dialogue through organisations such as CARICOM, faced external pressure to align with U.S. positions. This dynamic illustrates how geopolitical power asymmetries shape regional diplomacy. Consequently, Venezuela's destabilisation cannot be separated from the restructuring of regional political alignments.

The implications of Venezuela's crisis extend significantly into the Caribbean region. Historically, Venezuela has played a critical role in Caribbean energy security, particularly through initiatives such as PetroCaribe. The collapse of these arrangements forced Caribbean states to seek alternative, often more expensive, energy sources, increasing fiscal pressure (Trinkunas, 2015). Energy insecurity has compounded existing economic vulnerabilities in small island developing states. In addition, migration flows from Venezuela have placed a strain on Caribbean health, labour, and social protection systems (Chaves-González & Echeverría-Estrada, 2020; International Organization for Migration, 2019; 2025). These pressures have been unevenly distributed, affecting states differently based on size, capacity, and proximity. Nonetheless, the regional impact has been substantial and enduring.

Caribbean states have also faced intensified diplomatic and strategic dilemmas as a result of Venezuela's destabilisation. Many governments were compelled to navigate competing pressures between maintaining traditional non-alignment principles and accommodating U.S. geopolitical expectations. This has exposed the limited diplomatic autonomy of small states within hemispheric power structures (Briguglio, 1995). Regional cohesion has been challenged as states adopted divergent positions on Venezuela. Such fragmentation weakens collective bargaining capacity and regional governance mechanisms. Moreover, Venezuela's erosion as a regional actor has altered long-standing dynamics of South-South cooperation. These changes have reshaped the Caribbean's geopolitical environment in subtle but profound ways.

Despite growing scholarship on Venezuela's internal crisis (Bull & Rosales, 2020; Levine & Crisp, 1998; Stetz, 2022; Venezuelan & Ausman, 2019) and U.S. foreign policy, limited attention has been paid to the Caribbean as a secondary yet significantly affected region. Existing studies tend to focus on Venezuela-U.S. relations or on humanitarian conditions within Venezuela itself (Corrales & Penfold, 2015; Stetz, 2022). The indirect regional consequences, particularly for small Caribbean states, remain under-theorised and empirically marginalised. This gap obscures the extent to which great-power interventions generate transnational spillover effects beyond their primary targets. By neglecting the Caribbean perspective, the literature underestimates the systemic nature of destabilisation. Addressing this gap is essential for a comprehensive understanding of hemispheric power dynamics. This study responds directly to this omission.

Accordingly, this paper critically examines the role of the United States in destabilising Venezuela and analyses the resulting consequences for Caribbean nations. It situates Venezuela's crisis within broader regional power relations and structural inequalities. Using a qualitative, theory-driven approach, the study integrates dependency theory, critical geopolitics, and structural power analysis. This framework enables examination of both material and discursive dimensions of destabilisation. By foregrounding Caribbean experiences, the study re-centres small states within geopolitical analysis. The paper contributes to scholarship on intervention, regional spillover, and small-state vulnerability. Ultimately, it advances a more inclusive and regionally grounded understanding of contemporary hemispheric politics.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in an integrated theoretical framework that combines Dependency Theory, Critical Geopolitics, and Structural Power Theory to explain how external intervention in Venezuela generates destabilising effects with broader regional implications for the Caribbean (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Dodds & Atkinson, 2000; Cox, 1987). Dependency Theory provides insight into how peripheral states, such as Venezuela and its Caribbean partners, are structurally constrained by asymmetrical economic and political relationships with global powers, making them susceptible to coercive pressures and economic vulnerabilities (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979). Critical Geopolitics complements this perspective by interrogating how discourses of legitimacy, sovereignty, and intervention are constructed by both local and external actors, shaping policy responses and public perceptions in the Caribbean (Dodds & Atkinson, 2000). Structural Power Theory further illuminates how global hierarchies of authority and institutional control allow powerful states to influence the domestic and regional policies of smaller nations, reinforcing

patterns of dependency and limiting autonomous decision-making (Cox, 1987). Together, these perspectives shift the analytical focus from viewing destabilisation as an internal or accidental outcome to understanding it as a structurally produced phenomenon embedded within the global political economy. The framework facilitates examination of how external sanctions, energy policy shifts, and diplomatic pressure interact with regional economic vulnerabilities to influence Caribbean states' policy choices. By integrating economic, political, and discursive dimensions, this approach enables a holistic understanding of the mechanisms through which Venezuela's crisis reverberates across the region and affects small-state sovereignty, cohesion, and agency.

Dependency Theory and Peripheral Vulnerability

Dependency theory provides a foundational lens for understanding Venezuela and the Caribbean as structurally constrained within the global capitalist system. Originating from the work of Frank (1967), Cardoso and Faletto (1979), and later Caribbean scholars, dependency theory posits that peripheral and semi-peripheral states remain economically vulnerable due to historical patterns of extraction, unequal exchange, and external control. Venezuela's dependence on oil exports and Caribbean states' reliance on energy imports exemplify these structural asymmetries. U.S. sanctions and financial restrictions exacerbate this dependency by constraining Venezuela's capacity to engage in autonomous development, while simultaneously destabilising Caribbean economies that depended on Venezuelan energy cooperation. From this perspective, destabilisation is not an unintended consequence but an expected outcome of coercive interventions imposed on dependent economies. The Caribbean's exposure to these shocks reflects its continued insertion into a global system that privileges core-state interests over regional stability.

Critical Geopolitics and Regime Destabilisation

Critical geopolitics contributes an interpretive framework for analysing how power is exercised through discourse, legitimacy claims, and strategic narratives. This perspective emphasises that geopolitical interventions are justified not merely through material power but through ideological constructions such as "democracy promotion," "human rights," and "regional security" (Ó Tuathail, 1996). In the Venezuelan case, U.S. policy discursively framed the state as authoritarian and illegitimate, thereby normalising extraordinary measures such as sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and recognition of alternative leadership. These narratives marginalised regional voices, including those of Caribbean states advocating dialogue and non-intervention. Critical geopolitics thus reveals how destabilisation operates not only through economic pressure but through symbolic and normative power. The Caribbean's constrained diplomatic space reflects the dominance of hegemonic geopolitical narratives that limit alternative regional responses.

Structural Power and Economic Coercion

Structural power theory, as articulated by Strange (1994), further explains how control over global financial systems, trade networks, and energy markets enables powerful states to shape outcomes without direct military intervention. The United States exercises structural power through its influence over international banking systems, sanctions regimes, and access to global

markets. Venezuela's exclusion from these systems weakened state capacity and intensified economic collapse. Caribbean states, lacking comparable structural leverage, were indirectly affected through rising energy costs, reduced fiscal space, and increased exposure to global market volatility. Structural power thus operates transnationally, producing regional instability even among states not directly targeted. This perspective underscores how destabilisation transcends national borders and embeds insecurity within regional systems.

Regional Spillover and Small-State Vulnerability

Integrating these theories allows for an understanding of regional spillover effects as structurally embedded rather than incidental. Small-state vulnerability theory complements this framework by highlighting Caribbean states' limited adaptive capacity in the face of external shocks (Briguglio, 1995). Energy dependence, narrow economic bases, and limited institutional capacity amplify the regional consequences of Venezuela's destabilisation. Migration flows, humanitarian pressures, and security risks are therefore not isolated phenomena but manifestations of systemic fragility. This framework positions the Caribbean as a reactive space, shaped by external power struggles, rather than as an autonomous regional actor.

Synthesis and Analytical Implications

Taken together, this theoretical framework conceptualises U.S. destabilisation of Venezuela as a multi-dimensional process produced through economic coercion, geopolitical discourse, and structural power asymmetries. It explains why the Caribbean, despite not being the primary target, experiences significant economic, political, and humanitarian consequences. The framework rejects state-centric explanations that isolate Venezuela's crisis from regional dynamics. Instead, it situates destabilisation within a broader system of global inequality and hegemonic intervention. This approach provides a robust foundation for analysing the implications of great-power actions on vulnerable regions and underscores the necessity of regional, sovereignty-based alternatives to coercive foreign policy.

Methods

Research Approach and Paradigm

This study adopts a **qualitative research design** grounded in a **critical interpretivist paradigm** to explore the political, economic, and social implications of the U.S. destabilisation of Venezuela for the Caribbean region. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the study's focus on power relations, geopolitical narratives, and structural processes that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative indicators alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The critical interpretivist orientation enables the study to examine how meanings, interests, and inequalities are constructed and reproduced within international relations. This paradigm is consistent with dependency theory, critical geopolitics, and structural power theory, which emphasise context, historical embeddedness, and asymmetrical power. Rather than seeking causal generalisation, the study prioritises analytical depth and theoretical explanation. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of destabilisation as a systemic and transnational phenomenon.

Research Design Strategy

This study employs a qualitative documentary and discourse-analytic design, utilising a systematic examination of secondary sources to investigate Caribbean leadership, regional dynamics, and U.S. foreign policy toward Venezuela (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design enables analysis of policy decisions, sanctions regimes, diplomatic statements, and regional responses without relying on primary data collection, which is often limited by political sensitivity and restricted access. Documentary analysis is particularly suitable for studies of international power and foreign policy, as official texts and institutional narratives function as key instruments through which governance and authority are exercised (Bowen, 2009). Complementing this, discourse analysis interrogates how language constructs concepts such as legitimacy, threat, and sovereignty, revealing the normative and strategic assumptions underpinning U.S. and Caribbean policymaking (Fairclough, 2013). Together, these methods facilitate triangulation across multiple data types and perspectives, enhancing analytical depth and credibility. The strategy ensures methodological rigour by combining systematic text selection, coding, and interpretive analysis while remaining feasible and ethically responsible, given its reliance on publicly available documents. Overall, this approach enables a rich, theoretically grounded understanding of leadership behaviour, regional cohesion, and the influence of foreign interests in small-state diplomacy.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Data for this study were drawn from multiple high-quality sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, official government documents, and publications of multilateral institutions, to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Academic literature was systematically sourced from established databases such as Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and JSTOR, providing both scholarly credibility and access to diverse disciplinary perspectives. Policy documents included U.S. sanctions legislation, statements from the U.S. Department of State, reports from international financial institutions, and communiqués from CARICOM and the Organisation of American States, capturing both policy intentions and regional responses (CARICOM Secretariat, 2020, 2025; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2024). Inclusion criteria required that documents be published between 2000 and the present, focus explicitly on Venezuela, U.S. foreign policy, or Caribbean regional implications, and demonstrate analytical or policy relevance. Sources lacking methodological transparency, scholarly rigour, or official legitimacy were systematically excluded to maintain data quality and reliability. This purposive, structured selection strategy ensured the dataset was both rich and theoretically meaningful, supporting in-depth qualitative analysis. By integrating multiple source types and applying explicit inclusion criteria, the study enhanced the trustworthiness, relevance, and validity of the findings while capturing the full spectrum of regional and international perspectives.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection followed a structured, multi-stage process designed to ensure thoroughness and relevance. Initially, a systematic search of academic databases, policy repositories, and official

government portals was conducted using targeted keywords, including “U.S. sanctions Venezuela,” “Venezuela and the Caribbean,” “energy diplomacy,” and “regional spillover effects.” In the second stage, retrieved documents were screened for relevance, credibility, and methodological rigour using predefined inclusion criteria, prioritising peer-reviewed publications, official reports, and recognised policy analyses. Third, selected texts were organised and coded thematically in alignment with the study’s theoretical framework, which integrates sovereignty theory, dependency theory, and constructivist norms. Coding captured both dominant narratives and peripheral perspectives, allowing for a nuanced understanding of leadership behaviour and regional dynamics. Data collection continued iteratively until saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of new conceptual insights across categories. This systematic procedure ensured a comprehensive and balanced evidence base, providing both depth and breadth to support the subsequent qualitative analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis, guided by the study’s integrated theoretical framework of sovereignty theory, dependency theory, and constructivist norms (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis began with open coding, in which recurring concepts were identified across texts, including destabilisation, power asymmetry, energy dependence, and regional vulnerability. In the second stage, axial coding was employed to group these concepts into broader analytical themes such as structural dependency, geopolitical discourse, and asymmetrical power dynamics. To complement thematic coding, discourse analysis was applied to policy statements, official communiqués, and speeches to examine how legitimacy, threat, and intervention were linguistically constructed and politically framed (Fairclough, 2013). Analytical memos were maintained throughout to document interpretive insights and explicitly connect empirical observations to the theoretical constructs underpinning the study. An iterative, recursive approach ensured that emergent patterns were continuously compared across sources, enhancing both analytical depth and theoretical integration. This rigorous and systematic procedure provided a coherent framework for interpreting Caribbean leadership behaviour, foreign influence, and regional responses to the Venezuelan crisis, strengthening the credibility and explanatory power of the findings.

Trustworthiness and Rigour

This study ensures trustworthiness through adherence to established qualitative criteria, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Credibility was enhanced by triangulating data across multiple sources, including peer-reviewed literature, official policy documents, parliamentary records, and regional communiqués, to capture both dominant and peripheral perspectives. Dependability was supported by maintaining a transparent audit trail that documented search strategies, inclusion criteria, coding decisions, and analytic procedures, allowing external reviewers to evaluate the consistency of the research process. Confirmability was addressed through reflexive memo-writing and explicit acknowledgement of the researcher’s positionality, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in the data rather than subjective bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transferability was strengthened by providing thick descriptions and rich contextualisation of both the Caribbean geopolitical

environment and Venezuelan crisis dynamics, enabling readers to assess applicability to similar small-state contexts. The iterative coding and analysis processes further reinforced the dependability of findings by allowing emergent patterns to be systematically validated across sources. Collectively, these strategies ensure that the study meets rigorous qualitative standards, enhancing the reliability, validity, and interpretive credibility of insights into Caribbean leadership, sovereignty, and regional responses.

Ethical Considerations

In this secondary-data qualitative study, ethical risks were minimal, as all data sources were publicly available, verifiable, and appropriately cited in accordance with APA 7th edition guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2020). No human participants were involved, eliminating concerns about informed consent, confidentiality, or potential harm. Despite the absence of direct human subjects, the study maintained scholarly integrity by ensuring accurate representation of source material and avoiding misquotation or misinterpretation. Reflexivity was employed to acknowledge the researcher's positionality, recognising potential biases and their influence on analytical interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transparency in data selection, coding, and analysis processes further strengthened ethical rigour by allowing external verification of methodological decisions. Academic honesty was upheld through diligent attribution, careful contextualisation of sources, and adherence to both disciplinary and institutional ethical norms. Collectively, these measures ensured that the research process was conducted responsibly, safeguarding intellectual and scholarly standards while producing reliable, credible, and ethically sound findings.

Historical Context of U.S.-Venezuela Relations

U.S.-Venezuela relations have historically been shaped by strategic economic and geopolitical interests, particularly Venezuela's vast petroleum reserves. Throughout much of the twentieth century, Venezuela was one of the United States' most reliable oil suppliers, and the bilateral relationship was largely cooperative. U.S. multinational corporations played a dominant role in Venezuela's oil industry, benefiting from favourable investment conditions and political stability. In return, Venezuela enjoyed economic growth and international legitimacy within a U.S.-led hemispheric order. This relationship firmly aligned Venezuela with the Western bloc during the Cold War. Political elites largely adhered to liberal democratic norms compatible with U.S. interests. As a result, Venezuela was often portrayed as an exception to the instability that characterised much of Latin America.

The foundations of this relationship began to erode in the late twentieth century due to economic crisis and declining public trust in traditional political institutions. Structural adjustment programmes, falling oil prices, and rising inequality weakened Venezuela's social contract (Karl, 1997). These conditions contributed to widespread dissatisfaction with U.S.-backed neoliberal policies. The failed 1989 Caracazo uprising marked a turning point, revealing deep societal fractures and state repression. Public disillusionment created space for alternative political movements. These developments challenged the legitimacy of the existing political order. The stage was thus set for a dramatic reconfiguration of U.S.-Venezuela relations.

Hugo Chávez's election in 1998 represented a fundamental rupture in bilateral relations. Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution rejected neoliberal orthodoxy and emphasised state sovereignty, social redistribution, and regional integration (Ellner, 2014). Central to this project was the reassertion of state control over Venezuela's oil resources. The nationalisation of oil assets directly challenged U.S. corporate interests and reduced foreign influence in the energy sector. Chávez also promoted a multipolar world order, aligning Venezuela with Cuba, China, Russia, and other non-Western actors. These shifts repositioned Venezuela from a strategic partner to an ideological challenger. Consequently, U.S. policy began to view Venezuela through an adversarial lens.

U.S. responses to the Chávez government increasingly reflected concerns over regional influence and ideological diffusion. Venezuela's leadership role in initiatives such as ALBA and PetroCaribe was perceived as undermining U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean and Latin America (Briceño-Ruiz & Ribeiro Hoffmann, 2021; Hirst, n.d.; Kneuer, 2022; Oleksenko et al., 2023; Trinkunas, 2013; Vassallo, 2010). These programmes strengthened South-South cooperation and reduced dependence on U.S.-dominated financial institutions. U.S. officials framed these initiatives as threats to democratic governance and market stability. This framing marked a shift from engagement to containment. Venezuela's foreign policy activism was interpreted as destabilising rather than emancipatory. Such narratives laid the groundwork for more assertive intervention strategies.

The 2002 coup attempt against Chávez further intensified mistrust between the two countries. Although the coup ultimately failed, evidence of U.S. support for opposition actors reinforced Venezuelan claims of external interference (Golinger, 2006). Following the coup, Chávez consolidated power and expanded social programmes funded by oil revenues. U.S. policy, in turn, increasingly relied on diplomatic pressure and support for opposition movements. Democracy promotion became a central justification for intervention. However, critics argue that these efforts prioritised regime change over democratic pluralism. The episode entrenched a cycle of mutual hostility and suspicion.

Following Chávez's death in 2013, U.S.-Venezuela relations deteriorated further under Nicolás Maduro's presidency. Economic challenges intensified due to falling oil prices, policy mismanagement, and external pressures. The United States escalated sanctions, targeting Venezuela's financial systems and oil exports (Weisbrot & Sachs, 2019). These measures were justified as responses to alleged democratic erosion and human rights abuses. However, sanctions significantly reduced state revenue and exacerbated humanitarian conditions. The cumulative effect was economic collapse and institutional strain. This period marked the most severe phase of bilateral antagonism.

The historical trajectory of U.S.-Venezuela relations reveals a pattern of conditional engagement shaped by strategic interests. Cooperation prevailed when Venezuelan policies aligned with U.S. economic and geopolitical priorities. Conflict emerged when Venezuela pursued autonomy and redistribution outside U.S. influence. This history contextualises contemporary destabilisation as part of a longer continuum rather than an isolated response. Understanding this legacy is essential for analysing current policy choices and their regional repercussions. It also highlights the

asymmetrical power dynamics that define hemispheric relations. These dynamics continue to shape outcomes for Venezuela and the wider Caribbean region.

Caribbean Regional Responses to Venezuela's Destabilisation

Caribbean responses to Venezuela's destabilisation have been shaped by structural vulnerability, historical ties, and competing geopolitical pressures. Many Caribbean states historically benefited from cooperative arrangements with Venezuela, particularly through energy diplomacy initiatives such as PetroCaribe. Many Caribbean states historically benefited from Venezuela's energy cooperation under the PetroCaribe initiative, which provided preferential oil financing and long-term, low-interest payment arrangements that supported energy access and fiscal planning across the region (Cusack, 2019; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.; Rennhack & Valencia, 2015). As Venezuela's crisis deepened, Caribbean governments faced difficult policy choices between economic pragmatism and geopolitical alignment. The erosion of Venezuelan capacity disrupted long-standing economic relationships. This disruption exposed the fragility of Caribbean energy security. Consequently, regional responses were characterised by caution rather than confrontation.

CARICOM played a central role in articulating a collective Caribbean position on the Venezuelan crisis. Consistent with its normative commitment to sovereignty and non-intervention, CARICOM advocated dialogue and peaceful resolution rather than coercive measures (CARICOM, 2020). Caribbean leaders resisted external pressure to support regime-change strategies. This stance reflected both principled foreign policy traditions and pragmatic concerns about precedent. Many Caribbean states feared that normalising external intervention could later be applied to their own domestic affairs. CARICOM's diplomatic posture sought to preserve regional autonomy. However, this position increasingly conflicted with U.S. strategic priorities.

Despite efforts at unity, Caribbean responses were not uniform. Individual states adopted divergent positions based on economic dependence, diplomatic ties, and domestic political considerations. Some governments aligned more closely with U.S. policy in pursuit of aid, security cooperation, or trade advantages. Others maintained neutrality or continued engagement with the Venezuelan government. This divergence weakened regional cohesion and collective bargaining power. Fragmentation limited CARICOM's ability to influence hemispheric decision-making. It also exposed asymmetries in power and vulnerability among Caribbean states. As a result, regional solidarity proved difficult to sustain.

Energy insecurity emerged as one of the most immediate consequences of Venezuela's destabilisation for the Caribbean. The collapse of PetroCaribe forced states to seek alternative energy sources at higher market prices. Increased fuel costs strained public finances and heightened debt vulnerabilities (Briguglio, 1995). Smaller economies with limited diversification were disproportionately affected. Governments were compelled to redirect resources away from social programmes to meet energy demands. This fiscal reallocation intensified social and economic pressures. Energy dependence thus became a critical vector through which external destabilisation translated into regional hardship.

Migration flows from Venezuela presented additional challenges for Caribbean states. Countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and several Eastern Caribbean islands experienced increased arrivals of Venezuelan migrants. These movements placed pressure on healthcare systems, labour markets, and social services (UNHCR, 2020). Caribbean states often lacked the institutional capacity to manage large-scale migration effectively. Humanitarian obligations clashed with limited fiscal resources. Migration also generated domestic political tensions and social anxieties. These dynamics underscored the transnational consequences of Venezuela's collapse.

Caribbean diplomatic space was further constrained by intensifying U.S. pressure: aid conditionality, security cooperation, and diplomatic signalling incentivised alignment with U.S. positions. Small states faced asymmetric power relations that limited policy autonomy. Refusal to comply risked diplomatic marginalisation or economic repercussions. This environment narrowed the range of viable foreign policy options available to Caribbean governments. Sovereignty became increasingly negotiated rather than absolute. The Venezuelan crisis thus revealed the structural limits of Caribbean independence within hemispheric politics.

Overall, Caribbean regional responses illustrate how external intervention in one state reverberates across an interconnected region. The Venezuelan case demonstrates that destabilisation has profound, indirect consequences for small, vulnerable states. Caribbean experiences challenge state-centric analyses that isolate crises within national borders. Instead, they highlight the importance of regional spillover and systemic vulnerability. These responses also expose enduring inequalities within global power structures. Understanding Caribbean reactions is therefore essential to evaluating the broader implications of U.S.-Venezuela relations. This perspective strengthens calls for regional solidarity, energy diversification, and diplomatic autonomy.

U.S. Sanctions as Economic Warfare

Economic sanctions have become the principal instrument of U.S. foreign policy toward Venezuela, functioning as economic warfare rather than as diplomatic persuasion. Sanctions targeting Venezuela's oil sector, financial institutions, and international transactions significantly reduced state revenue and economic functionality. These measures restricted access to global markets and constrained the government's ability to import essential goods (U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2021). Although sanctions are publicly framed as tools to promote democracy and human rights, their practical effects extend far beyond political elites. Scholars argue that sanctions often operate as collective punishment, disproportionately harming civilian populations (Pape, 1997). In Venezuela, sanctions compounded existing economic fragilities and accelerated institutional collapse. This dynamic situates sanctions within a coercive rather than corrective framework.

From a political economy perspective, sanctions operate by weaponising structural dependence within the global system. Venezuela's reliance on oil exports and dollar-denominated financial systems rendered it especially vulnerable to external economic pressure. The U.S. leveraged its dominance over global financial, insurance, and trade networks to enforce compliance without

resorting to military intervention (Strange, 1994). This form of power is less visible than armed conflict but equally disruptive. Sanctions disrupted supply chains, deterred foreign investment, and increased transaction costs. Over time, these constraints eroded state capacity and governance effectiveness. Economic warfare thus unfolded incrementally but persistently.

Empirical evidence indicates that sanctions contributed to Venezuela's humanitarian crisis rather than alleviating political repression. Studies show that mortality rates increased and access to food and medicine declined following the intensification of sanctions from 2017 and beyond (Bahar et al., 2021; Weisbrot & Sachs, 2019). These outcomes challenge claims that sanctions selectively target political elites. Instead, they reveal how economic coercion reshapes everyday survival conditions. Sanctions also weakened public infrastructure, including electricity and healthcare systems. These systemic effects reduced the government's ability to respond to crises. The humanitarian consequences became transnational as migration increased. Thus, economic warfare produced both domestic suffering and regional instability.

Sanctions also altered Venezuela's external behaviour and alliances. Exclusion from Western financial systems pushed Venezuela toward alternative partnerships with China, Russia, and Iran. These alliances were often framed as evidence of geopolitical threat, reinforcing U.S. justifications for continued pressure. However, such realignments were reactive rather than ideological choices. Economic isolation narrowed Venezuela's policy options and reduced diplomatic flexibility. This cycle entrenched antagonism and reduced prospects for negotiated resolution. Sanctions, therefore, contributed to geopolitical polarisation. Rather than restoring democracy, they deepened systemic confrontation.

The regional consequences of sanctions against Venezuela were particularly pronounced in the Caribbean, where states had relied heavily on concessional energy arrangements. Sanctions constrained Venezuela's ability to maintain initiatives such as PetroCaribe, which had historically provided subsidised oil to support fiscal stability and social programmes across the region (Cusack, 2019; Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). As these arrangements eroded, Caribbean governments faced rising fuel costs, budgetary pressures, and increased vulnerability to global energy price fluctuations (International Monetary Fund, 2015). The disruption of preferential energy access not only strained public finances but also highlighted structural dependencies in small-state energy security and regional development. The loss of subsidised oil flows forced some countries to seek more expensive commercial imports, compounding fiscal challenges and limiting flexibility in social spending. These dynamics underscore the interconnection between foreign policy measures, energy diplomacy, and regional economic resilience. Overall, the collapse of PetroCaribe financing illustrates how external sanctions can have cascading effects on small-state economies and regional cooperation frameworks (Cusack, 2019; International Monetary Fund, 2015). These effects were indirect yet severe, demonstrating how economic warfare transcends national borders: Caribbean economies, already structurally vulnerable, absorbed shocks generated by policies they did not design. Sanctions thus externalise costs onto neighbouring states. This spillover challenges state-centric evaluations of sanctions' effectiveness. Regional stability became collateral damage.

Sanctions also constrained Caribbean diplomatic autonomy. States that advocated engagement or neutrality faced pressure to align with U.S. policy positions. Economic dependence and aid conditionality limited resistance to coercive diplomacy. This environment narrowed foreign policy choices for small states. Sanctions thereby reinforced hemispheric power asymmetries. Caribbean governments were positioned as policy takers rather than equal stakeholders. Sovereignty became conditional upon compliance. Economic warfare thus reshaped regional power relations as much as economic outcomes.

Overall, U.S. sanctions against Venezuela exemplify contemporary economic warfare embedded within global structural power. These measures destabilised Venezuela while producing humanitarian, political, and regional consequences that extended well beyond their stated objectives. The Venezuelan case demonstrates how sanctions function as instruments of domination rather than democratic reform. Their effects reveal the limits of coercive economic statecraft. For the Caribbean, sanctions intensified vulnerability and constrained agency. Understanding sanctions as economic warfare reframes debates about legitimacy and effectiveness. This perspective underscores the need for alternative approaches grounded in dialogue, regional cooperation, and respect for sovereignty.

Regime Change and Diplomatic Isolation

Beyond economic coercion, U.S. policy toward Venezuela has explicitly pursued regime-change objectives, framing these actions as necessary to restore democracy and regional stability. The recognition of alternative political leadership, including the appointment of opposition figures as legitimate authorities, marked a significant departure from the traditional principle of state sovereignty (Bull & Rosales, 2020). Diplomatic isolation campaigns reinforced this strategy, delegitimising Venezuela in multilateral forums such as the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Lima Group. Such initiatives signalled to regional partners and global actors that alignment with the U.S. was politically rewarded, while neutrality or engagement with Venezuela was discouraged. This created an environment in which external pressure overshadowed local diplomatic initiatives. Scholars argue that these strategies often prioritise political objectives over the practical resolution of crises (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). The deliberate marginalisation of Venezuela contributed to heightened political polarisation and institutional fragility.

Regime-change efforts relied not only on formal diplomatic mechanisms but also on the support of civil society and opposition movements within Venezuela. Funding, technical assistance, and strategic counsel were directed toward actors positioned to challenge the incumbent government (Corrales & Penfold, 2015). These interventions were framed as supporting democratic norms, yet they frequently intensified domestic conflict. Political polarisation deepened as opposition and government forces competed for legitimacy under the watchful eye of external powers. U.S.-backed messaging emphasised the illegitimacy of the Maduro government, creating a parallel narrative that resonated internationally. However, these measures undermined potential avenues for dialogue and compromise. The resultant political environment became highly adversarial, limiting the prospects for negotiated settlement.

Diplomatic isolation extended to multilateral institutions, where Venezuela faced suspension or censure, further restricting its ability to engage in regional diplomacy. The OAS, under pressure from the United States, repeatedly questioned Venezuela's democratic credentials, affecting voting rights and participation (Canton, 2021; Di Bonaventura Altuve, 2021; Friedrichs, 2022; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2024; Smilde, 2018; Smilde&Pantoulas, 2016), which has been made worse with the withdrawal of Venezuela from OAS (Perez, 2017). This reinforced the narrative of Venezuela as a rogue state while legitimising unilateral coercive measures. Caribbean states, which traditionally emphasised principles of non-intervention, were placed in a difficult position. They had to balance historical solidarity with Venezuela against external pressure to endorse sanctions or political exclusion. This created an unprecedented diplomatic dilemma. Caribbean leaders had to weigh sovereignty against pragmatism in a rapidly polarising hemisphere.

Caribbean states faced tangible consequences for their positions regarding U.S.-Venezuela policy. States that resisted alignment risked reduced access to development aid, trade concessions, and security cooperation (Briguglio, 1995). Conversely, those who publicly supported U.S. positions were sometimes criticised domestically for abandoning regional solidarity. These asymmetric pressures exposed the limited foreign policy autonomy of small Caribbean states. Decision-making was constrained not only by economic vulnerability but also by the potential reputational and political costs. This structural imbalance illustrates how great-power interventions can indirectly destabilise small-state governance. The Caribbean became a theatre where U.S. strategic objectives intersected with local vulnerability.

The regime-change approach also disrupted regional integration mechanisms. Venezuela had historically been a significant contributor to energy and social development initiatives, including PetroCaribe and ALBA. External pressure in the form of sanctions and the deterioration of Venezuela's oil sector significantly weakened the material basis for regional cooperation initiatives, undermining Caracas's ability to sustain energy diplomacy arrangements such as PetroCaribe and, in turn, constraining collective bargaining capacity within regional organisations (Cederlöf& Kingsbury, 2019; Rodríguez, 2024; United States policy analysis on sanctions impacts, 2019). As Venezuela's oil production and export capacity declined due to economic mismanagement, production collapse, and the intensification of financial sanctions focused on the state oil company PDVSA, the subsidised energy flows that once underpinned South-South cooperation with Caribbean states diminished sharply, forcing these states into more expensive energy markets and weakening institutional cooperation frameworks (Cederlöf& Kingsbury, 2019; CRS report, 2019). PetroCaribe's decline exposed structural dependencies in the Caribbean's energy security, eroding the region's leverage as it lost access to concessional financing and preferential fuel supplies that had previously bolstered fiscal stability and inter-governmental bargaining positions (Cederlöf& Kingsbury, 2019). The contraction of this cooperation mechanism also reduced Venezuela's diplomatic footprint in hemispheric forums, diminishing its role as a broker of integrated regional policy responses. These shifts illustrate how sanctions and external economic pressures can have cascading effects beyond the target state, reshaping regional alignments and weakening collective diplomatic capacity. The case of PetroCaribe underscores the interconnected nature of energy supply, geopolitical influence, and

institutional cooperation in the Caribbean context. Consequently, Caribbean states have found their collective policy space constrained, highlighting the broader implications of external intervention on small-state agency. The absence of Venezuela as a fully engaged regional actor also created strategic vacuums that external actors could exploit. Small states were left to navigate economic and political instability with limited support. In effect, U.S.-driven regime change reshaped the regional geopolitical landscape.

Critics argue that regime-change and diplomatic isolation strategies have often been counterproductive, deepening instability rather than restoring democratic governance. By undermining the capacity of national institutions and polarising the domestic political landscape, these measures have contributed to governance vacuums (Ellner, 2014). Political elites often exploit external pressure to consolidate power, framing opposition and civil society as foreign-backed. This dynamic reinforces authoritarian tendencies rather than mitigating them. Sanctions and isolation become justification for internal repression, creating a cycle of escalating instability. For Caribbean states, this creates uncertainty regarding migration, trade, and security. The indirect consequences extend well beyond Venezuelan borders.

Overall, U.S. strategies of regime change and diplomatic isolation have destabilised Venezuela while reverberating across the Caribbean. The combination of political pressure, economic coercion, and international delegitimisation reshaped regional power dynamics. Small states in the Caribbean are caught between adherence to non-intervention principles and compliance with external demands. These interventions illustrate the asymmetric influence of great powers over weaker states. They also highlight the ethical and practical dilemmas inherent in coercive foreign policy. The Venezuelan case serves as a critical example of how regime-change strategies can produce transnational instability. Understanding these dynamics is essential for both regional policy formulation and scholarly analyses of hemispheric geopolitics.

Implications for Caribbean Energy Security

One of the most immediate and tangible consequences of Venezuela's destabilisation for the Caribbean has been energy insecurity. Venezuela historically provided concessional oil financing through initiatives such as PetroCaribe, which allowed Caribbean states to purchase oil at preferential rates and defer payments over extended periods (Barboza, 2022; Blackwood, 2021; Girvan, 2011). This arrangement not only reduced energy costs but also supported fiscal stability, social programmes, and infrastructure development across the region. The decline of Venezuelan oil production, combined with U.S.-imposed restrictions on energy transactions, disrupted these mechanisms. Caribbean economies, many of which were heavily dependent on imported fuel, were suddenly exposed to volatile global oil markets. Small island developing states (SIDS), with limited domestic energy production, faced particularly acute challenges. Rising energy costs placed significant strain on national budgets, limiting spending on social and development priorities.

The collapse of PetroCaribe compelled Caribbean governments to secure alternative energy suppliers, often at higher costs and under less favourable credit arrangements (Cusack, 2019; International Monetary Fund, 2015). Countries such as Jamaica, Haiti, and the Dominican

Republic faced the necessity of renegotiating contracts with private international oil companies, exposing them to increased fiscal vulnerability and heightened sensitivity to global energy market fluctuations (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2024). The loss of concessional financing disrupted budgetary planning and constrained social and development spending, demonstrating the structural dependence of small Caribbean states on subsidised energy flows. In addition, the shift to market-priced oil imports amplified economic exposure and underscored the risks associated with overreliance on a single regional partner for energy security. These developments illustrate how geopolitical and economic pressures in one state can cascade regionally, affecting national policy options and economic stability. Moreover, the sudden adjustment required of Caribbean governments highlights the strategic importance of diversifying energy sources and strengthening regional cooperation mechanisms. Overall, the transition away from PetroCaribe emphasises the interplay between external interventions, energy diplomacy, and fiscal resilience in small-state governance. This shift not only affected energy affordability but also introduced new dependencies on global markets, where price fluctuations could quickly translate into economic instability. For small economies with narrow export bases, this heightened the risk of fiscal crisis. The reliance on imported fossil fuels highlighted structural vulnerabilities in energy planning and national resilience. Governments were compelled to prioritise short-term energy security over long-term strategic development. These dynamics underscored the fragility of Caribbean energy sovereignty.

The disruption of energy flows also had ripple effects across broader economic and social systems. Higher energy prices increased production costs for industries reliant on fuel, including transportation, manufacturing, and tourism. Inflationary pressures intensified, reducing household purchasing power and exacerbating poverty (Briguglio, 1995). Public sector budgets were further constrained, as energy subsidies and fiscal transfers competed with funding for health, education, and social welfare. Energy insecurity thus became a multiplier of economic vulnerability. Social tensions arose in response to higher utility and transport costs. Migration pressures intensified as employment opportunities contracted. In this way, energy shocks intersected with multiple development challenges.

Caribbean regional organisations faced difficulties in mitigating these energy security challenges. CARICOM and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre explored options for joint procurement, diversification, and the adoption of renewable energy (CARICOM, 2025). However, progress was uneven, constrained by financial, technical, and institutional limitations. Individual member states had varying capacities to negotiate contracts and implement alternative energy projects. Coordination was further complicated by differing diplomatic alignments over Venezuela and the U.S. This fragmented response limited the region's collective bargaining power in global energy markets. Consequently, energy insecurity reinforced pre-existing disparities among Caribbean states. The regional policy architecture proved insufficient to effectively absorb external shocks.

The crisis highlighted the need for long-term diversification of energy sources. Overreliance on imported fossil fuels left Caribbean economies exposed to geopolitical conflicts and market volatility. Policymakers increasingly emphasised renewable energy, energy efficiency, and regional cooperation as mitigation strategies (Barboza, 2022; Blackwood, 2021; Girvan, 2011)—

investments in solar, wind, and biomass projects offered opportunities for enhanced energy independence. Nevertheless, resource constraints and technological gaps limited the pace of transition. External financial and technical support remained critical for implementing large-scale renewable projects. Without sustained investment, Caribbean energy systems remain structurally vulnerable.

Energy insecurity also intersected with geopolitical pressures in the region. U.S. sanctions on Venezuela and attempts to influence Caribbean alignment forced small states to navigate complex diplomatic choices. Acceptance of alternative Venezuelan energy supplies risked contravening U.S. policy, while compliance with sanctions exacerbated energy shortages. This dual pressure illustrates how energy dependency can translate into political vulnerability. Energy security in the Caribbean is therefore not merely an economic issue but a strategic one. Domestic energy policies are entangled with regional diplomacy and hemispheric power dynamics. The Venezuelan case demonstrates that energy destabilisation can serve as a mechanism of coercive influence in global politics.

Overall, Venezuela's destabilisation exposed structural weaknesses in Caribbean energy systems and highlighted the geopolitical consequences of regional dependency. The collapse of PetroCaribe disrupted concessional financing, increased fiscal pressures, and heightened vulnerabilities across social and economic sectors. Regional organisations and national governments face the dual challenge of ensuring immediate energy access while building long-term resilience through diversification and renewable technologies. Caribbean experiences illustrate that energy security is inseparable from sovereignty and autonomy in development. The Venezuelan crisis serves as a cautionary example of how external interventions can undermine the resilience of small states. Strengthening regional energy cooperation, pursuing renewable alternatives, and managing geopolitical pressures are critical for safeguarding Caribbean economic and strategic stability. Ultimately, energy insecurity represents both a direct consequence of Venezuelan destabilisation and a broader challenge to regional resilience in the twenty-first century.

Migration and Humanitarian Pressures

Venezuela's prolonged political and economic crisis has generated substantial migration flows that extend well beyond its borders, with significant consequences for the Caribbean. Countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Curaçao, and Guyana have received increasing numbers of Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2020). These influxes have placed enormous pressure on public services, including healthcare, education, and housing, in small island economies with limited capacity. Labour markets are affected as migrants seek employment in both formal and informal sectors, sometimes displacing local workers or exacerbating wage competition. Social cohesion is also challenged, as communities adapt to rapid demographic changes. The migration crisis demonstrates that destabilisation in one state can have profound regional repercussions. Caribbean governments are thus compelled to manage humanitarian pressures arising from geopolitical and economic factors beyond their control.

Caribbean states have shown humanitarian concern, providing asylum, temporary protection, and access to basic services for Venezuelan migrants. However, limited institutional capacity constrains the scale and effectiveness of these responses (Briguglio, 1995). Many agencies are under-resourced and reliant on international aid, which can be sporadic and insufficient. Public services often face bottlenecks, reducing access to healthcare, education, and social welfare for both migrants and citizens. Small states also face administrative challenges in registering, documenting, and integrating large migrant populations. These structural limitations increase vulnerability to both economic and social shocks. Consequently, humanitarian support remains partial and uneven across the region.

The migration crisis is not simply a Venezuelan problem but a regional consequence of destabilisation amplified by external interventions. U.S. sanctions and diplomatic pressures have weakened Venezuelan state capacity, limiting domestic provisions for basic needs. The resulting outflows of migrants effectively externalise the humanitarian burden to neighbouring states (Weisbrot & Sachs, 2019). Caribbean countries, already constrained by small economies and limited social safety nets, absorb the consequences of policies they neither initiated nor control. This asymmetry underscores the indirect costs of geopolitical interventions. Peripheral states bear disproportionate burdens relative to their influence over global policy decisions. Migration thus becomes both a symptom and a mechanism of regional instability.

The rapid increase in migration flows also poses challenges for social cohesion and political stability. Large numbers of new arrivals can strain inter-community relations, heighten competition for resources, and exacerbate xenophobic sentiments (IOM, 2019). In some cases, political actors exploit migration pressures to mobilise domestic support or frame migrants as security threats. Such dynamics can undermine social trust and regional solidarity. Caribbean governments must therefore balance humanitarian obligations with the maintenance of social order. Failure to manage these pressures risks both domestic and regional instability. Migration thus becomes a critical lens for understanding the broader effects of Venezuelan destabilisation.

Migration pressures carry significant economic implications beyond labour market effects. While remittances from migrants provide some financial inflows, they rarely compensate for the increased demand for public services, infrastructure, and social programmes (Chaves-González & Echeverría-Estrada, 2020). Caribbean countries receiving Venezuelan migrants, such as Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Barbados, have faced heightened pressure on housing, healthcare systems, and educational services, amplifying fiscal strain on already constrained national budgets (International Organization for Migration, 2021). The sudden influx of migrants often requires governments to expand social service provision rapidly, which can create budgetary imbalances and challenge short-term planning. Moreover, the need to integrate migrants into local economies and communities adds administrative and regulatory burdens. These dynamics highlight the multidimensional costs of migration, demonstrating that the economic benefits of remittances are insufficient to offset the broader social and fiscal pressures. Overall, the Caribbean experience underscores the importance of regional cooperation and international support in mitigating the economic and social impacts of large-scale migration flows. Furthermore, international assistance often comes with conditions that limit policy flexibility. Caribbean states must make difficult trade-offs between addressing immediate

humanitarian needs and pursuing long-term development goals. The economic dimension of migration is thus inseparable from the humanitarian and social dimensions. Migration becomes a multidimensional challenge requiring coordinated policy responses.

Regional organisations have sought to coordinate responses to migration pressures, though results have been mixed. CARICOM and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) have emphasised collaborative strategies, data-sharing, and resource mobilisation (CARICOM, 2025). However, the lack of financial and institutional capacity limits the effectiveness of regional coordination. Individual states continue to operate largely independently, navigating migration challenges in line with their domestic priorities. Disparities in capacity and resources contribute to uneven implementation of regional guidelines. Consequently, collective regional response remains aspirational rather than fully realised. This fragmentation highlights the vulnerability of small states to external geopolitical shocks.

Overall, Venezuelan migration demonstrates how destabilisation in one state produces profound and enduring humanitarian, economic, and social consequences for neighbouring regions. Caribbean states are forced to respond to crises generated externally, often with limited means. Migration pressures intersect with energy insecurity, economic fragility, and political constraints, amplifying regional vulnerability. The Venezuelan case underscores the need for proactive regional strategies, international support, and multilateral coordination to manage humanitarian impacts. It also illustrates the broader ethical and policy implications of external interventions. Addressing migration effectively requires holistic approaches that integrate economic, social, and diplomatic dimensions. Ultimately, migration from Venezuela exemplifies the transnational consequences of state destabilisation in the twenty-first century.

Caribbean Foreign Policy Autonomy and U.S. Pressure

The destabilisation of Venezuela has significantly constrained Caribbean autonomy in foreign policy decision-making. U.S. diplomatic pressure has compelled Caribbean states to adopt positions on Venezuela that may conflict with their national interests, historical commitments to sovereignty, and principles of non-alignment (Bishop, 2013). Voting patterns in international organisations such as the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the United Nations have become arenas for geopolitical contestation, often reflecting coercive influence rather than independent judgment. Small states that resist U.S. policy risk diplomatic marginalisation, aid withdrawal, or exclusion from hemispheric initiatives. This creates a structural imbalance in which the foreign policy choices of Caribbean states are more conditioned by external pressures than by internal priorities. The narrowing of policy space undermines Caribbean states' capacity to exercise agency in regional and global affairs. Consequently, sovereignty becomes negotiated rather than absolute, reshaping the region's diplomatic landscape.

External pressure has also weakened regional cohesion and collective bargaining power, as CARICOM—which has historically sought unified stances on international issues—struggles to articulate coherent positions when member states face asymmetric incentives and risks (Agaba, Mulyanyuma, Bwala, & Anneth, 2025). Fragmentation, economic disparities, and weak institutional capacity continue to challenge CARICOM's ability to coordinate foreign policy and

sustain collective action in the face of external influence and internal sovereignty concerns (Agaba et al., 2025). These structural weaknesses diminish the region's diplomatic leverage and complicate efforts to present a cohesive voice in global fora. The phenomenon reflects long-standing integration hurdles, including varying national interests and implementation gaps in regional agreements. Understanding these dynamics is critical for assessing small states' vulnerabilities to external pressures in international relations. Strengthening institutional frameworks and harmonising policy approaches could enhance collective responses to external geopolitical challenges. Such reform would bolster CARICOM's normative authority and its capacity to manage asymmetric foreign interests more effectively. Some states align more closely with U.S. directives to secure economic or security benefits, while others prioritise non-interventionist principles and regional solidarity. These divergent approaches dilute the effectiveness of regional diplomacy. Fragmentation limits the capacity of small states to negotiate with larger powers or advocate for regional interests. Caribbean states are left to navigate competing pressures individually rather than collectively. This erosion of unity exacerbates vulnerability amid broader geopolitical dynamics.

Economic dependence amplifies the constraints on foreign policy autonomy. Many Caribbean states rely on U.S. aid, trade access, and financial support, creating incentives to align with U.S. positions even when they contradict domestic or regional interests (Briguglio, 1995). Conditionality tied to assistance further constrains independent decision-making. States face a trade-off between immediate economic security and long-term strategic autonomy. In effect, external leverage transforms foreign policy into a transactional process. This dynamic highlights the intersection of economic vulnerability and political dependency. Caribbean sovereignty is thus compromised by structural asymmetries in the international system. External intervention in Venezuela serves as a mechanism that indirectly limits small states' autonomy.

Diplomatic pressures also shape domestic political discourse in the Caribbean. Alignment or resistance to U.S. policy on Venezuela can influence electoral politics, domestic legitimacy, and policy narratives. Leaders may face criticism for appearing too deferential to external powers or, conversely, for antagonising a major partner. These domestic repercussions add a layer of constraint on foreign policy choices. Political elites must consider not only international consequences but also voter perceptions and societal expectations. The result is a complex interplay between external coercion and domestic accountability. This dynamic further limits Caribbean states' capacity to act independently in international affairs.

Caribbean foreign policy autonomy is additionally affected by multilateral institutional frameworks. Regional organisations, such as CARICOM and the Caribbean Development Bank, operate within broader hemispheric systems influenced by the U.S. Caribbean states are often dependent on multilateral mechanisms for financial support, technical assistance, and diplomatic platforms. These dependencies create structural pressure to align with the policies of dominant powers. Efforts to assert independence are frequently constrained by the risk of marginalisation within key institutions (Bishop, 2013). The Venezuelan crisis has highlighted how regional organisations can both enable and limit sovereignty. Institutional constraints thus shape both strategy and policy execution.

The constraints on autonomy have long-term implications for Caribbean strategic planning. Dependence on external actors for security, economic stability, and diplomatic support can limit the development of independent foreign policy capabilities. Persistent external influence may encourage reactive rather than proactive diplomacy. Caribbean states risk becoming peripheral actors in regional security and economic governance, with limited leverage over outcomes affecting their immediate environment. The Venezuelan crisis illustrates how small states are forced to navigate between principle and pragmatism. Strategic planning is often subordinated to survival in a system dominated by larger powers. These conditions emphasise the structural vulnerabilities inherent to small-state foreign policy.

Overall, U.S. pressure in the context of Venezuela's destabilisation has reshaped Caribbean foreign policy, limiting autonomy and constraining regional cohesion. Small states face asymmetric choices between alignment, non-alignment, and principled diplomacy, each carrying potential costs and benefits. Economic dependence, multilateral constraints, and domestic political pressures intersect to restrict policy space. The Venezuelan case illustrates how geopolitical interventions in one state reverberate across a region, influencing both sovereignty and decision-making capacity. Caribbean states must navigate these pressures while balancing economic, political, and ethical considerations. This dynamic underscores the importance of regional solidarity, strategic diversification, and institutional resilience. Understanding these pressures is essential for evaluating Caribbean agency in the twenty-first century.

Regional Stability and Security Concerns

Venezuela's prolonged political and economic destabilisation has created significant implications for regional security within the Caribbean basin. The collapse of state institutions and widespread economic hardship have increased vulnerabilities to illicit activities, including drug trafficking, human smuggling, and organised crime (Felbab-Brown, 2017). Weak law enforcement capacity in Venezuela allows criminal networks to operate with relative impunity, creating transnational spillover effects that directly impact neighbouring Caribbean states. Small island nations, already constrained by limited policing and maritime resources, face heightened risks of criminal incursions. The convergence of economic, political, and social instability in Venezuela amplifies these threats. Caribbean governments must contend not only with domestic security challenges but also with cross-border risks originating from Venezuelan instability. This complex dynamic highlights the interconnected nature of regional security in the twenty-first century.

The migration crisis stemming from Venezuela's turmoil further complicates security concerns. Large influxes of migrants increase pressure on border control, immigration systems, and local law enforcement (IOM, 2019). While most migrants seek legitimate refuge, porous borders and insufficient screening can be exploited by criminal networks. Caribbean states must balance humanitarian obligations with national security imperatives. Inadequate infrastructure and limited coordination exacerbate these vulnerabilities. As a result, security risks are not isolated to Venezuela but diffuse throughout the region. The regional security environment is thus shaped by both direct destabilisation and secondary humanitarian pressures.

Organised crime and illicit trade have direct economic implications for Caribbean states. The trafficking of narcotics, contraband, and other illegal goods undermines legal markets, increases law enforcement costs, and fosters corruption (UNODC, 2020). The financial and social consequences are particularly pronounced in small economies that rely on tourism and trade. Criminal networks exploit governance gaps created by regional instability, further eroding state capacity. Weak judicial systems in some Caribbean nations struggle to prosecute cross-border criminal activity effectively. Spillover effects from Venezuela exacerbate these structural vulnerabilities. This interconnection between economic and security stability highlights the multidimensional risks of regional destabilisation.

The Venezuelan crisis has challenged regional cooperation frameworks. CARICOM, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and other regional bodies have sought to enhance security coordination, intelligence-sharing, and capacity-building initiatives (CARICOM, 2025). However, institutional limitations, resource constraints, and geopolitical pressures limit the effectiveness of these interventions. Differences in political alignment and policy priorities among member states further complicate coordinated responses. Fragmented efforts reduce the ability to respond proactively to transnational threats. Caribbean states must navigate a delicate balance between collective action and national sovereignty. Strengthening regional cooperation remains critical to mitigating destabilisation-related security risks.

The Venezuelan crisis also poses challenges for maritime security. Smuggling, illegal fishing, and trafficking often exploit the Caribbean's extensive maritime boundaries. Small island states have limited naval and coast guard capacities to monitor these activities effectively. Transnational criminal networks adapt quickly to enforcement gaps, taking advantage of jurisdictional and resource limitations (Felbab-Brown, 2017). This creates persistent threats to economic infrastructure, including ports, shipping lanes, and offshore energy facilities. Enhanced maritime surveillance, joint patrols, and regional intelligence-sharing are therefore essential. Failure to address these vulnerabilities could undermine regional trade and economic resilience.

Political instability in Venezuela has further implications for regional governance and investment confidence. Investors may perceive Caribbean markets as riskier due to potential spillover effects from Venezuelan instability, including social unrest or supply chain disruptions. Security concerns can deter tourism, foreign direct investment, and international trade partnerships. Weak state capacity in both origin and host countries amplifies uncertainty. Regional development strategies must now account for both direct and indirect consequences of Venezuelan instability. The intersection of security, economic, and political pressures underscores the complex nature of regional vulnerability. Caribbean policymakers are therefore compelled to integrate security planning with economic and social development strategies.

In sum, Venezuela's destabilisation generates a regional insecurity complex that extends far beyond its national borders. Transnational criminal networks, migration pressures, and maritime vulnerabilities intersect with economic and governance challenges, creating compounded risks for Caribbean states. Regional cooperation, intelligence-sharing, and capacity-building are essential to mitigate these threats. The Venezuelan case demonstrates that instability in one state can catalyse multi-dimensional risks across an entire region. Addressing these challenges

requires coordinated, multi-sectoral approaches that balance security, humanitarian, and development priorities-failure to act risks entrenching systemic vulnerabilities. Ultimately, regional stability and security in the Caribbean are closely tied to resolving Venezuela's ongoing crisis.

Limitations

Despite its analytical depth, this study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the qualitative design relies exclusively on secondary data, which constrains the ability to capture lived experiences or first-hand perspectives from policymakers, regional leaders, or affected populations. While document and discourse analysis provide valuable insight into power structures and policy narratives, they may not fully reflect informal negotiations or unrecorded diplomatic dynamics. Second, the study's interpretive framework may introduce researcher subjectivity, particularly in discourse analysis, where meaning is contextually constructed. Although reflexive practices and triangulation were employed, complete neutrality cannot be assured.

Third, the focus on U.S.-Venezuela relations may understate the role of other global actors, such as China, Russia, and international financial institutions, whose involvement also shapes regional outcomes. Fourth, the Caribbean is treated as a regional entity, which may obscure important variations among individual states with differing economic capacities, foreign policy orientations, and levels of exposure to Venezuela's crisis. Fifth, the rapidly evolving geopolitical environment means that some policy developments may change after the study period, limiting temporal generalisability. Finally, the study prioritises structural explanation over predictive modelling, which limits its capacity to forecast future outcomes quantitatively. Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish the study's theoretical contribution, as its purpose is to provide a critical, contextualised understanding rather than a universal prediction.

Discussion

The U.S. destabilisation of Venezuela illustrates the profound consequences of external intervention on internal state vulnerabilities and regional stability (Patrick, 2006; Petras, 2015). While domestic governance failures in Venezuela, including corruption and institutional weakness, have contributed to the crisis (Venezuelan & Ausman, 2019), coercive measures such as economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and regime-change strategies have intensified economic collapse and political fragmentation (Weisbrot & Sachs, 2019). These interventions have not only exacerbated Venezuela's internal challenges but also produced ripple effects across the Caribbean, highlighting the region's interconnectedness. Caribbean small island states, heavily reliant on Venezuelan energy, trade, and remittances, face disproportionate costs despite limited influence over U.S. policies (Barboza, 2022; Blackwood, 2021; Girvan, 2011). This dynamic underscores broader patterns of asymmetrical power relations in the international system, where major powers can impose costs on peripheral states without corresponding accountability. The Venezuelan case challenges narratives that frame foreign intervention as neutral, benign, or inherently democratising. Instead, it emphasises the structural vulnerabilities of small states in the face of global power asymmetries.

Energy security emerges as one of the most immediate and tangible impacts of Venezuela's destabilisation on the Caribbean. Venezuela's PetroCaribe initiative had provided concessional oil financing that supported economic and fiscal stability for multiple Caribbean states (Barboza, 2022; Blackwood, 2021; Girvan, 2011). The collapse of Venezuelan energy supply, compounded by U.S.-imposed sanctions, disrupted Caribbean states' access to affordable fuel and forced them to secure alternative suppliers under less favourable financial and credit terms, thereby increasing fiscal vulnerability and exposure to global market fluctuations (Cusack, 2019; International Monetary Fund, 2015). Rising energy costs amplified fiscal pressures and increased vulnerability to global price fluctuations. Small island economies, dependent on imported energy, were particularly exposed, with ripple effects on transportation, manufacturing, and social welfare expenditure (Briguglio, 1995). Energy insecurity thus illustrates how external intervention in a single state can trigger structural shocks across an entire region. The Caribbean's dependence on Venezuelan oil underscores the strategic importance of energy diversification and regional cooperation.

Migration flows constitute another critical dimension of the crisis, placing substantial humanitarian and social pressures on Caribbean states. Large numbers of Venezuelans have sought refuge in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Curaçao, and Guyana, straining public services, housing, and labour markets (Chaves-González&Echevarría Estrada, 2020; Herbert, 2021; Hosein, R., Gonzales et al., 2022; UNHCR, 2020). While Caribbean states have demonstrated humanitarian concern, institutional capacity constraints limit the effectiveness of their responses. Migration pressures intersect with domestic socio-economic vulnerabilities, creating tensions over resource allocation, social cohesion, and public perception (IOM, 2019). External intervention indirectly transfers these humanitarian burdens to states least equipped to manage them. This situation illustrates the transnational consequences of geopolitical actions and the ethical responsibility of intervening powers. Addressing migration effectively requires coordinated regional strategies, international support, and sustainable policy frameworks.

The Venezuelan crisis (Corrales, 2015; Bull & Rosales, 2020; Huertas Cardenas, 2024; Rees-Evans &Carvosso, 2021) has also constrained Caribbean autonomy in foreign policy. U.S. diplomatic pressure has compelled states to take positions on Venezuela that may conflict with strategic interests, sovereignty norms, and principles of non-alignment (Bishop, 2013). Voting patterns in international forums, such as the OAS and UN, have become arenas for geopolitical contestation. States that resist U.S. policy face potential economic retaliation, aid reduction, or diplomatic marginalisation. Economic dependence, domestic political pressures, and multilateral constraints exacerbate the erosion of policy space. This dynamic demonstrates how external intervention can limit both collective and individual state agencies. Caribbean diplomacy is increasingly conditioned by external power asymmetries rather than regional priorities.

The destabilisation of Venezuela further compromises regional stability and security. Weak state capacity, combined with political and economic collapse, has amplified transnational criminal networks, illicit trade, human trafficking, and organised crime (Felbab-Brown, 2017; UNODC, 2020). Caribbean states, already contending with security challenges, must respond to spillover effects that strain law enforcement and governance structures. Migration pressures and resource competition intensify security vulnerabilities. Fragmented regional coordination limits the

capacity to manage these multifaceted risks effectively. The Venezuelan crisis illustrates how instability in one state can generate a complex web of threats across an entire region. Addressing these challenges requires integrated approaches combining security, humanitarian, and development strategies.

The cumulative impacts of energy insecurity, migration pressures, foreign policy constraints, and regional instability highlight the multidimensional consequences of external intervention. Caribbean states often bear the brunt of destabilising effects from external interventions, including energy disruptions and sanctions, while having limited participation in the decision-making processes that generate these outcomes, highlighting asymmetries in global power relations and small-state vulnerabilities (Cusack, 2019; Chaves-González & Echeverría-Estrada, 2020). Small states face ethical, economic, and strategic dilemmas as they balance humanitarian obligations, security needs, and compliance with external pressures. The case underscores the limitations of relying solely on normative frameworks of democracy or interventionist foreign policy to achieve stability. It also reveals a critical gap in the literature: while much scholarship analyses Venezuela's domestic crisis, there is limited research on the intersectional impacts on Caribbean small states. Understanding these dynamics requires integrating geopolitical, economic, and humanitarian perspectives.

The Venezuelan crisis demonstrates the interconnected and asymmetric nature of regional vulnerabilities in the Caribbean. U.S. destabilisation measures have amplified internal challenges in Venezuela while producing significant spillover effects in neighbouring states. Energy security, migration, foreign policy autonomy, and regional stability are interlinked, with small states disproportionately affected. This analysis highlights the need for regional resilience strategies, including diversifying energy sources, coordinating migration management, and strengthening institutional frameworks. It also calls for nuanced foreign policy approaches that balance sovereignty, humanitarian responsibility, and geopolitical realities. By centring the experiences of Caribbean states, this study illuminates the broader consequences of external intervention in small-state contexts. Future research should examine the effectiveness of policy interventions and regional cooperation mechanisms in mitigating these multidimensional impacts.

Recommendations and Policy Implications

Addressing the multidimensional impacts of Venezuela's destabilisation requires a coordinated regional approach that prioritises sovereignty, dialogue, and resilience. Caribbean states must strengthen regional institutions, such as CARICOM and CDEMA, to coordinate responses to energy, migration, and security challenges (CARICOM, 2025). Enhanced institutional capacity enables small states to negotiate collectively with larger powers, mitigating the asymmetry of influence. Policy frameworks should integrate economic, humanitarian, and security dimensions, ensuring that interventions are mutually reinforcing. Collaboration across sectors can reduce individual states' vulnerability to external shocks. Furthermore, regional policy coordination can strengthen Caribbean states' bargaining position in international forums. By adopting a collective approach, the Caribbean can transform vulnerability into strategic resilience.

Energy security must be a central component of regional policy. The collapse of Venezuelan oil exports and the disruption of PetroCaribe illustrate the risks of dependence on a single supplier (Barboza, 2022; Blackwood, 2021; Girvan, 2011). Caribbean states should pursue energy diversification strategies, including renewable energy investment, regional energy-sharing agreements, and access to alternative global suppliers. Reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels not only mitigates geopolitical risk but also supports climate adaptation and sustainability objectives. Multilateral financing mechanisms, such as the Caribbean Development Bank, can support infrastructure development and energy transition initiatives. Regional collaboration on energy policy also enables coordinated negotiation with external actors. Energy resilience is thus a strategic priority for both economic stability and regional autonomy—failure to act risks long-term fiscal and development vulnerabilities.

Migration and humanitarian pressures require proactive management strategies. Caribbean states must enhance institutional capacity to process asylum claims, provide social services, and integrate migrants into local economies (IOM, 2019; UNHCR, 2020). Regional coordination can facilitate resource sharing, capacity-building, and information exchange among states affected by Venezuelan migration flows. Partnerships with international organisations and donor countries can supplement domestic capacities. Policies should balance humanitarian obligations with national security and social cohesion objectives. Developing contingency plans for future migration surges is also essential. Comprehensive approaches reduce the social, economic, and political strain associated with large-scale displacement. Addressing migration effectively enhances both regional stability and human development outcomes.

Caribbean foreign policy autonomy must be preserved and strengthened. Small states require strategies that enable principled decision-making independent of coercive external pressures (Bishop, 2013). Diversifying diplomatic and economic partnerships beyond the U.S. can reduce vulnerability to asymmetric influence. Strengthening participation in multilateral forums, such as the UN and regional energy and trade organisations, enhances strategic leverage. Domestic political institutions should support evidence-based foreign policy decision-making and maintain policy continuity despite leadership changes. Regional solidarity is critical to amplify the voices of small states. Capacity-building in diplomacy, negotiation, and policy analysis strengthens long-term autonomy. Preserving sovereignty ensures that Caribbean states can pursue development goals aligned with their interests rather than external agendas.

Regional security challenges require an integrated and preventive approach. Coordinated intelligence-sharing, joint law enforcement operations, and maritime patrols can mitigate spillover effects from Venezuela's instability (Felbab-Brown, 2017; UNODC, 2020). Investment in security infrastructure and human capital strengthens resilience against organised crime, trafficking, and other transnational threats. Regional contingency planning, including crisis response protocols and cross-border collaboration, enhances preparedness. Security strategies must also account for the intersection of migration, energy, and economic vulnerabilities. Partnerships with international organisations can provide technical and financial support. Strengthened regional security mechanisms contribute to broader political and economic stability. Proactive engagement is preferable to reactive measures that often exacerbate vulnerabilities.

Economic resilience must be central to mitigating the effects of regional instability. Caribbean states should pursue fiscal diversification, including expanding trade partnerships, promoting tourism, and supporting local production (Briguglio, 1995). Regional economic integration can facilitate shared access to markets, resources, and infrastructure. Developing contingency funds and stabilisation mechanisms can reduce exposure to shocks resulting from geopolitical crises. Investment in human capital, education, and technology enhances long-term economic adaptability. Coordination with regional financial institutions can provide low-cost financing for strategic development projects. Economic resilience supports both social stability and diplomatic autonomy. Strengthening financial independence reduces external actors' leverage over domestic policy.

Finally, long-term stability requires embedding governance reforms and institutional capacity-building across all sectors. Transparent, accountable institutions support energy management, migration policy, and security initiatives. Inclusive governance ensures that vulnerable populations, including migrants, participate in decision-making processes. Capacity-building in policy analysis, regional negotiation, and strategic planning enhances Caribbean states' ability to respond to complex crises. Engagement with civil society and international partners can provide additional expertise and resources. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation ensure that policies remain relevant in evolving geopolitical contexts. By prioritising institutional strength, regional cooperation, and strategic foresight, Caribbean states can mitigate the multidimensional consequences of external interventions while preserving autonomy and resilience.

Conclusion

The destabilisation of Venezuela cannot be adequately explained as a solely domestic failure; it must be situated within a broader context of U.S. intervention and historical regional power dynamics. Economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and explicit regime-change strategies have exacerbated the economic collapse, political fragmentation, and social crisis within Venezuela (Weisbrot & Sachs, 2019). These interventions have had far-reaching spillover effects, demonstrating how instability in a single state can affect neighbouring regions. For the Caribbean, this has translated into energy insecurity, migration pressures, and exposure to transnational criminal networks. Small states, constrained by limited economic and institutional capacity, bear disproportionate costs in the absence of meaningful influence over the policies driving the crisis. This asymmetry underscores structural vulnerabilities inherent to small-state geopolitics. Understanding Venezuelan destabilisation requires a regional lens that accounts for both internal mismanagement and external coercion.

Energy insecurity has emerged as one of the most immediate consequences of Venezuela's destabilisation for Caribbean states. The collapse of PetroCaribe and disruptions in oil supply have forced island economies to seek alternative energy sources under less favourable terms (Barboza, 2022; Blackwood, 2021; Girvan, 2011). Rising fuel costs have strained public finances, disrupted industrial production, and amplified vulnerability to global price fluctuations. Small island states, with limited diversification in energy imports, have faced significant economic exposure. The disruption of energy flows illustrates the tangible consequences of foreign intervention in a resource-dependent region. Policy responses must therefore prioritise

diversification of energy sources and strategic regional cooperation. Failure to address energy insecurity undermines both economic stability and long-term development planning.

Migration and humanitarian pressures further illustrate the regional ramifications of Venezuela's destabilisation. Large-scale migration to countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Curaçao, and Guyana has strained public services, housing, and social cohesion (UNHCR, 2020; IOM, 2019). Caribbean states have shown humanitarian commitment, but institutional capacity constraints limit the scale and effectiveness of interventions. Migration flows also interact with labour markets, governance challenges, and security vulnerabilities, producing multidimensional consequences. External interventions indirectly transfer these burdens to small states, highlighting the inequities of global power relations. Regional strategies must integrate migration management with broader social, economic, and security planning. The Venezuelan case demonstrates that humanitarian crises cannot be decoupled from geopolitical dynamics.

The Venezuelan crisis has significantly constrained Caribbean autonomy in foreign policy. U.S. diplomatic pressure has compelled alignment with its policies, often conflicting with historical principles of sovereignty, non-alignment, and regional solidarity (Bishop, 2013). States that resist face the threat of economic or diplomatic retaliation, limiting both individual and collective agency. Multilateral institutional constraints, combined with economic dependence, reinforce asymmetrical power dynamics. Caribbean governments are therefore navigating a narrow policy space, balancing external pressures with domestic priorities. This erosion of autonomy complicates long-term strategic planning and reduces regional leverage. The Venezuelan crisis exemplifies how small the actions of major powers can be in shaping states' foreign policy options.

Venezuela's collapse has also compromised regional stability and security. Political and economic instability in Venezuela has facilitated the proliferation of illicit trade, organised crime, and transnational security threats (Felbab-Brown, 2017; UNODC, 2020). Small Caribbean states, with limited enforcement capacity, face elevated risks of trafficking, smuggling, and other criminal activities. Migration pressures exacerbate these vulnerabilities, placing additional strain on governance and social cohesion. Fragmented regional coordination further limits effective responses. Strengthening multilateral mechanisms, intelligence-sharing, and security infrastructure is essential to mitigate these risks. Regional stability is therefore contingent upon proactive collaboration rather than reactive measures.

Addressing these multidimensional challenges requires a reorientation toward regional cooperation, multilateralism, and respect for sovereignty. Caribbean states must coordinate strategies for energy security, migration management, and foreign policy alignment to reduce vulnerability to external shocks. Strengthening institutions and fostering resilience at the regional level can enhance the capacity to manage spillover effects from destabilised states. Diplomatic engagement, dialogue, and conflict prevention mechanisms offer more sustainable solutions than coercive interventions. Policy frameworks should integrate economic, humanitarian, and security dimensions to address interconnected risks. Regional solidarity is essential to balance the asymmetry of power relations in the hemisphere. The Venezuelan crisis highlights the critical importance of coordinated, context-sensitive responses.

In conclusion, the Venezuelan case serves as a cautionary example of how destabilisation in one state reverberates across an interconnected region. For the Caribbean, this has meant increased economic strain, humanitarian pressure, compromised foreign policy autonomy, and elevated security risks. External pressure has also weakened regional cohesion and collective bargaining power, as CARICOM, while striving for unified stances on international issues, struggles to articulate coherent foreign policy positions when member states face asymmetric economic incentives, political fragmentation, and external influence (Agaba et al., 2025; United Nations, 2023). While internal governance failures in Venezuela contributed to the crisis, external interventions exacerbated its effects at both the domestic and regional levels. The lessons of Venezuela underscore the ethical and strategic responsibilities of global powers in shaping regional outcomes. Caribbean small states, as vulnerable actors in asymmetric power relations, require proactive strategies to mitigate these multidimensional impacts. Ultimately, the Venezuelan experience illustrates that regional stability, development, and sovereignty are inextricably linked.

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