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Trump 2017 vs. 2025

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The title may be misleading because that Trump who took office as the 45th President of the United States in January 2017 is fundamentally the same man —perhaps recharged, undoubtedly older, but just as dangerous. Readers already know this. What matters here is assessing how the world, particularly Latin America and the Caribbean (referred to as "Our America" by Martí), has changed in the intervening years.

There are notable differences —mostly positive, but with some negative aspects. Let's dig deeper.

## **A Transformed Political Map in the Region**

The first point of analysis is the political map of the region. Unlike in 2017, progressive-leaning governments now dominate. While this shift does not guarantee absolute independence from Washington, it does make it less likely that these nations will blindly submit to the newly re-elected magnate's whims.

Major political players in the region, such as Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, Bolivia, and soon Uruguay, are under progressive leadership. Some, like Venezuela – the symbolic land of Bolívar and Chávez – are openly anti-imperialist.

Central America, historically considered the "backyard" of the United States, has also seen shifts. Nicaragua and Honduras now maintain stances that distance them from their fully pro-U.S. posture of the past century. Countries like Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Panama fall somewhere in between. However, Panama faces a particular danger, as discussed later.

The Caribbean, meanwhile, continues its historical stance of respect and distance from U.S. mandates. This is especially true for ALBA-TCP member states, with Cuba remaining a steadfast beacon of anti-imperialism in the region and the world.

### **Trump's Challenges in "Our America"**

It is debatable whether Trump will be able to overpower these progressive governments. Some have faltered on issues like Venezuela, failing to recognize that imperialism – along with domestically subjugated oligarchies – is the primary enemy.

Nevertheless, the current leaders, such as Lula in Brazil, Claudia Sheinbaum in Mexico, and Gustavo Petro in Colombia, present a stark contrast to their predecessors Michel Temer, Enrique Peña Nieto, and Juan Manuel Santos. Similarly, Xiomara Castro in Honduras represents a significant shift from Juan Orlando Hernández.

On the other hand, leaders like Argentina's Javier Milei and El Salvador's Nayib Bukele stand on the opposite side of the spectrum. Milei, a self-proclaimed global leader of the far right, demonstrates an allegiance bordering on betrayal to the concept of "Our America." Bukele's course, however, remains to be seen. The fact that he was invited to Trump's 2025 inauguration is telling, though its meaning is unclear.

Ecuador and Peru also hang in the balance. Ecuador faces imminent elections, while Peru is still grappling with the fallout of the

democratically elected President Pedro Castillo's removal.

## **A Changed Global Landscape**

The world has also evolved significantly since 2017.

China's meteoric rise as an economic and political power – already evident in 2017 – is now undeniable. This reality has triggered alarms in the West.

Russia, too, is no longer the same. Despite potential understandings between Trump and Russia's leader, after nearly three years of war, Russia boasts one of the world's most robust economies. Militarily, it arguably rivals China as the leading global power.

The BRICS+ bloc has also consolidated its influence, increasing its share of global GDP from 23% in 2017 to 30% in 2024. This growth challenges traditional hegemonic structures and presents a formidable obstacle to Trump's ambitions. His threats to punish countries abandoning the U.S. dollar as a global reserve currency signal this growing conflict.

## **Trump's Rhetoric and Strategic Posturing**

In the lead-up to assuming office as the 47th President, Trump has wasted no time wielding threats on the global stage. His targets include neighbors Mexico and Canada, Europe (over Greenland), and Panama.

Many dismiss Trump's rhetoric as absurd or delusional, but his threats likely reflect some level of strategic calculation. The imperial aspirations of his team shape these statements, which often resemble a negotiation tactic rooted in exerting maximum pressure to corner opponents.

Take the Panama Canal as an example. With Venezuela and Cuba as probable targets of aggression, control over the Canal would provide significant strategic leverage – even as a mere "*credible threat*." The Southcom already has a covert presence in Panama via the Regional Logistics Center for Humanitarian Assistance (CLRAH), a subject warranting deeper analysis.

One can imagine a conversation between the leaders of the U.S. and

Panama after January 20, 2025:

- **Trump:** "We'll take control of the Canal unless..."
- **Panama's Leader:** "Unless what?"
- **Trump:** "Unless you allow us to use Panama for undisclosed purposes, like operations against your neighbors."

## **North America and Greenland**

Similar dynamics could play out in U.S. relations with Canada and Mexico. Trump may seek to reconfigure the USMCA trade deal (formerly NAFTA) to make it even more advantageous to U.S. interests.

As for Greenland, Trump's ambitions extend beyond its geopolitical significance. Speculation about rare earth deposits beneath its ice makes it a prime target for U.S. exploitation, with figures like Elon Musk reportedly eyeing its resources.

## **A More Chaotic World**

In summary, the world of 2025 is markedly different from the one Trump inherited in 2017. In many respects, it is worse, as evidenced by the horrors in Gaza and the impunity of Zionist aggressors.

This analysis does not claim to predict the future. The chaotic dialectics of history can accelerate in unpredictable ways, especially in a world where rules have been discarded by a resurgent far right. We shall see.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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