

## **Courage My Friends Podcast Series X – Episode 1** **Venezuela, Canada and the “Donroe Doctrine”**

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**ANNOUNCER:** You're listening to *Needs No Introduction*.

*Needs No Introduction* is a rabble podcast network show that serves up a series of speeches, interviews and lectures from the finest minds of our time

**RESH:** How is the recent attack on Venezuela and the abduction of its President and First Lady connected to the United States's new National Security Strategy (the so-called “Donroe Doctrine”)? What does this new stage of US interventionism mean for Canada, our sovereignty and the wider region? And as the Global North shifts into hyper-imperialism will this slow the rise of the Global South or accelerate it?

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**COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER:** Welcome back to this podcast series by rabble.ca and the Tommy Douglas Institute at George Brown College.

In the words of the great Tommy Douglas...

**TOMMY (Actor):** Courage my friends, 'tis not too late to build a better world

**COURAGE MY FRIENDS ANNOUNCER:** This is the Courage My Friends Podcast.

**RESH:** Welcome to the premier episode of Season 10, *Venezuela, Canada and the “Donroe” Doctrine*.

I'm your host Resh Budhu.

In our first episode of the new year we are pleased to welcome back journalist, author and Director of the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, Vijay Prashad and Professor of International Relations at St. Thomas University, Shaun Narine. We discuss the recent US military attack on Venezuela and the abduction of President Nicolas Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores, the Trump administration's new National Security Strategy (the so-called Donroe Doctrine) and what this means for Canada and how all of this is connected to the decline of US hegemony, the rise of Asia and the West's shift into hyper-imperialism.

Vijay and Shaun, welcome back and thanks for joining us for the first episode of an already ominous New Year.

On January 3rd around 2:00 AM Caracas Time, the United States carried out a large military attack on Venezuela and abducted sitting President Nicholas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, who is a Deputy in the Venezuelan National Assembly. And there's a lot of information and misinformation about that night.

So, Vijay, give us your understanding of what happened on January 3rd and the charges against the Maduros because the US is saying that this was a law enforcement operation.

**VIJAY:** Yeah, I mean, it's great to be with you. It's a very, very unpleasant, Happy New Year, but so be it.

Well, I have a unfortunate thing is as you get older, you have to get up to go to the bathroom at night. And so on the 3rd of January, I was trooping to the bathroom and, very bad habit, looked at my phone and I saw a message from a dear friend of mine in Caracas, and it was one line said, "We are being bombed."

I called him and put on the camera. And, in real time I got to see some of the bombing because he lives a hill away from the part of Caracas that was bombed.

It was vicious. I mean, I remember Shock and Awe against Iraq in 2003.

In 22, 23 years, the United States has improved its military technology by million-fold. I mean, it's qualitatively different kind of bombardment.

Absolute Resolve, which is what they call this operation. And a 150 aircraft above ground.

They had the EA-18, growlers flying, which are like completely radar-jamming and electronics-jamming aircraft. They flew in from Puerto Rico.

They basically shut down the electricity grid, shut down communications, destroyed radars, and then took out the air defense system. And then they landed these robocops in the Presidential compound who took out 50 plus guards.

What chance do you have against airships? What chance do you have against this kind of ruthless bombardment?

You know, they destroyed a dialysis equipment and supplies warehouse. It wasn't just military targets. They hit a whole bunch of targets. And then they snatched Mr. Maduro.

Interestingly, United States violates the UN Charter, Article Two. They completely violate the UN Charter. They also violated the Head of State Immunity twice.

The Head of State Immunity is basically customary law, where if you are the Head of State, you have some latitude not to be arrested for a crime that some other country accuses you of.

Now, there's only one exception to the Head of State Immunity, and that's if you have an International Criminal Court warrant.

Well, I said that the US violated the Head of State Immunity twice. Because whereas they went and kidnapped Nicholas Maduro, violation of the Head of State Immunity, they were entertaining Benjamin Netanyahu in the United States who has an International Criminal Court warrant. That's a second Head of State Immunity violation. The US just doesn't care about international law.

They charged Mr. Maduro with the bizarrest charges.

I mean, one of them was that he's a kind of narco kingpin. With Tren de Aragua, they didn't charge him with being the head of that, but Cartel de los Soles, they charged him with being the head of that, the Cartel of the Suns.

They charged him with weapons possession, which is very weird because he's not a US national and I don't know if the US can charge a foreign national of excessive weapons possession.

I mean, if my country allows me to own a tank in my house, I don't know what business it is of the US. Well anyway, they have like 10 guns per person, thanks to the Second Amendment and so on. So there's that charge.

These charges of trafficking "loads of cocaine". Very weird phrase in the indictment, you know, unspecific - "loads of cocaine". I don't know what that means.

Well, after Nicholas Maduro and Cilia Flores were brought to New York, United States sort of backed away from the Cartel de los Soles allegations. It's interesting.

About two years ago, we looked into this Cartel de Los Soles because we started hearing about it from people in the United States government. This is before Trump comes into power. And interestingly, the Cartel de los Soles is a manufactured idea, manufactured by Venezuelan journalists in the 1990s. This is before Hugo Chavez comes to power.

They were talking about some military people who were involved in drug trafficking and on their insignia had a sun. And so the journalist called it the Cartel of the Suns.

There is no such thing called the Cartel of the Suns. But the journalists did it as a kind of conceit to talk about these military fellows involved.

The cartel doesn't exist. It's never existed. So the US had to walk away from that.

Tren de Aragua, the other charge in the indictment, it's a gang that was formed, or at least it grew inside the Venezuelan prison system.

But Maduro has never been the head of Tren de Aragua. There is no US report prior to Trump making this accusation that shows that. So the accusations are really bizarre.

There's a 92-year-old judge who is the sitting judge on this case. I mean, if this judge is a real judge, he should look at it prima facie and say, there's really no evidence. So, so many laws violated Resh. My head explodes sometimes. Like, how do you even explain this?

**RESH:** Well, you can't. I mean, this is, excuse the pun, but this is really very much trumped-up charges.

Shaun, you are talking about how this attack really aligns with America's new National Security Strategy that Trump has dubbed the Donroe Doctrine?

**SHAUN:** Well, other people have dubbed that, he's adopted it.

Well for one thing, you know, there are all these competing explanations and ideas as to why exactly the United States went of Venezuela. Some of my colleagues argue that they think basically the whole thing has been driven by Marco Rubio and that Rubio was sort of playing Trump, and Trump himself has no particular interest or knowledge in Venezuela itself. I think there are probably a number of different factors to account for why they decided to attack Venezuela.

In regards to the National Security Strategy, obviously they started attacking boats well before they actually published a strategy. But the idea that the United States was sort of moving towards an explicit spheres of influence, a reform of foreign policy that was put out in an article of Politico several months ago. And as far as I can tell, it was the only place that this particular idea was put forward.

And then the NSS itself comes out and it does accord to a significant degree with what this article was saying. Though the Americans are still in the NSS very explicitly saying they intend to remain engaged in the Indo-Pacific. Right? So there's not like they're ceding the Indo-Pacific to China, right?

They're actually saying, look, the Western Hemisphere is ours. In the Indo-Pacific, we have all kinds of active interests there. But, they really emphasize is the idea that the Western Hemisphere belongs to them. They expect regional states to not form alliances, to not form relationships, economic or otherwise with partners that they consider to be problematic.

And I think in a lot of ways, the Venezuela situation was an easy sort of first pass at asserting this, right? Simply saying, look, Venezuela is a relatively easy target. It's been on our radar. It's been a target. of ours for years and years now. Let's go in, let's take out Maduro. And let's send the message to the entire region that we're prepared to do something like this.

And of course, the message was received, right?

Immediately, all across the Western Hemisphere countries and leaders become nervous. And, of course the whole thing now with Greenland is adding a whole other

dimension to this situation. And if I'm reading this correctly, and from Canada as well, they're making good on the threat that no country in the Western Hemisphere can do anything that the United States finds to be objectionable.

All the resources, all of the wealth in fact of the Western Hemisphere essentially belongs to the United States, and they're prepared to assert themselves in a way to do so. Now, of course, intervening in Latin America is hardly anything new for the United States. But the threats against Greenland, of course, they're definitely new.

And of course, what's doubly striking in both cases is that you don't need to invade anybody to get the things that you want. Right? If you wanted Venezuelan oil, lift the sanctions on Venezuela, get yourself access to Venezuelan oil.

The national security excuse that they're using for getting involved in Greenland doesn't make a lot of sense, really. What they really want from Greenland are the resources. And there admittedly it is a little bit more problematic because the government of Greenland has put a moratorium on various kinds of drilling and mineral resource exploitation. So the Americans there, if they want to exploit those things that have to convince the Greenlanders to let them do it.

But to get back to the point, yes. I think the simplest way to look at this is that they're doing what they said they would do with national security strategy. They're sending a message to the region.

And from our perspective, from a Canadian perspective, it's especially interesting to see how we are gonna respond. Like what message do we think we're getting?

And of course this is pertinent in, in relation to the fact that Mark Carney is on his way to China to meet with Xi Jinping.

The other way to look at the strategy is also through the lens of saying they're partially involved or they're partly involved in trying to send the message to the region, get away from China. You know, like most of these countries have as their number one trading partner, China. And I think part of what's happening here is the Americans are sending notice to say, look, we're not happy with this.

When you look at the NSS, again, it does emphasize this idea that states in the Western Hemisphere should be forming exclusive relationships with American companies. So I think the Americans are asserting themselves in that way.

**RESH:** Right. And we're gonna talk more about China because they're a major reason here.

I was just listening to Trump talking about, well, if we don't take Greenland, then China and Russia would take Greenland.

So Homeland Security Advisor Steven Miller, offered a kind of executive summary of the National Security Strategy on CNN recently saying that, and I'm paraphrasing, that in a world governed by strength, force and power, the US can dispense with the normal niceties - I assume he meant international law - and conduct itself, as you're saying, as a super power, and basically just do whatever it wants. And this seems to illustrate what you describe Vijay as this current shift into hyper-imperialism.

**VIJAY:** Well, two years ago our institute, Tri-Continental, published a study, January, 2024, where we laid out the concept of hyper-imperialism.

Our argument was pretty straightforward, which is that the United States and its European partners, as a consequence of their own decisions to pursue globalization in a certain way, to free up their rich, to basically get more and more rich and not be accountable to the societies in which they live.

For all those reasons, they basically hollowed out the manufacturing. Hollowed out science and technology. Hollowed out the universities in a very real sense and find suddenly the center of gravity of the world economy shifting to Asia where there's been a lot of net fixed capital investment, where the universities are finding themselves to receive, you know, a lot of support. I'm not talking only about China, but China really is the core of this, you know, incredible science and technology investment.

And it's gotta be emphasized that some of this is also uneven. So it's not like it's a complete paradise in the shift to Asia. But the shift has occurred. United States has recognized that this shift has occurred. Mr. Obama's so-called pivot to Asia was an early indicator.

Then when Hilary Clinton was in Madras, in Chennai, she gave a speech talking about the need to build a new Silk Road from India northward to Russia. Her geography was a North-South axis.

Well, two years later, Xi Jinping says, we're gonna build a One Belt, One Road, but it's East-West.

And guess what? The United States didn't build the Silk Road from India up to Russia, and instead the Chinese built the Belt and Road Initiative. First One Belt, One Road, then the Belt and Road. And they did it. They built it. They built infrastructure, including in Latin America, very expensive infrastructure with all the big surpluses they had.

United States discovered that they have basically two sources of power. They've lost the source of power they used to have over raw materials, over finance, over science and technology. But two sources of power remain. One of them is military power.

United States has 900 military bases around the world. United States has the largest military spending on the planet and has spent it pretty well because they built some

pretty amazing technology. You know, what they did to Venezuela was a great demonstration of incredible like alien level military technology. They flew UFOs over the sky of Venezuela, you know.

The Israelis have that technology, but they didn't need to use it in Gaza because the Palestinians don't have anti-aircraft guns. They don't have radar systems. They don't have sovereignty. You know, for Israel it was, as they say, shooting fish in a barrel.

The United States got an opportunity to demonstrate to the world, look, this is what we can do, which is also to some extent what they did to Iran, but at a much smaller scale.

Again, they just froze. Iranian air defense systems. Iranians know that. It really put a chill into the Iranian military. You know, that the US can just come in and do what they want. You can't stop them right now.

So one source of power is military power. The other source of power is the power of information.

You know, they control the infrastructure. They own all the platforms. You know, we are talking on a US platform.

I'm in Santiago. The undersea cable from Valparaiso North to Los Angeles is owned by a US private company. The satellites above my head is Elon Musk's satellites. He has more satellites than the Chinese government.

I mean, they control information. Reuters. Associated Press, BBC.

If BBC says, you can't say Nicholas Maduro was kidnapped, and you can only say he was arrested, that's exactly what reporters around the world read when they write their copy, because they don't have journalists in Venezuela. They follow CNN, they follow the Associated Press. There is no real independent coverage on these issues. They can't find your podcast, yeah? Compared to finding CNN or whatever it is.

However much one is creating a new media apparatus or ecosystem, you're still competing against elephants, you know, huge, gigantic beasts.

And so information warfare and military warfare is where their sources of power lie. And they use it pretty effectively to try to dampen other powers. But there are contradictions and that's where we get our own sense of reality. So that the United States, even the Israelis can bomb from the sky.

The moment Israeli troops entered Gaza, the Palestinian resistance fought them and they had to go back to their yellow line. They didn't want to come into Gaza City for too long. They would come in, do an operation, go back to the yellow line. Why? 'cause the resistance would attack them.

If the United States lands troops in Venezuela, it'll be worse than Iraq because there are millions of Chavistas who know that the victory of the United States is the end of their lives. You know, I've talked to these Chavistas. They know that however hard things are now, it's better than it used to be before 1998. They do not want to return.

They're similar in Cuba. They don't want to go back to the regime of gangsters. They know that. They know the United States isn't promising them a better life. It's promising them worse, so they will fight.

The US has unbelievable, overwhelming power to destroy a country. It can't govern it. It showed that in Iraq. Showed that in Afghanistan. Never even tried in Libya. Didn't even try in Syria, you know, gave that up to Ex Al-Qaeda guy.

**VIJAY:** So that's part of the contradictions.

Another important contradiction, particularly for this show. Whatever Mark Carney might be, how did Canada, in the middle of all this, release a report in December of last year. The title is *Statement on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy: Exercising Sovereignty and Promoting Canada's Northern Strategy Abroad*.

If you read this report, and don't ask me how I found it or even why I read it. But I found it extremely interesting.

Okay. United States says the Western Hemisphere is ours, but you're losing Canada. Because Canada used to say, US ships can go through the Northern Passage, they just need to inform the Canadians. Now, it seems like they have to take permission beforehand.

And this might explain partly the whole Greenland thing. Because the US if it doesn't have a prone Canada, a Canada completely subservient to the United States, the US will have a hard time with the Northern Passage. But if it has a toehold, it owns Greenland, then it's the United States, Denmark and Canada will have to come to some agreement.

So I think there's a lot more to this Greenland thing than we are seeing. And also, maybe there's a lot more to Mr. Empty Suit. Mark Carney. I was surprised to read this report. I'll be interested to hear what you guys think of it.

**SHAUN:** Vijay, I hope there's more to Mark Carney than there seems to be. I don't think so.

I mean, yes. I think when they wrote that report, it was being strangely confrontational, right? What they're doing basically is they're daring Trump to send a ship through the Northwest passage without confirming with Canada what the Americans have done before. And given how cautious Canada is with Trump. If you look at how Carney responded to the attack on Venezuela, it was incredibly mealy-



mouthed. Trying very, very hard in a very passive voice, not to do anything to insult or alienate the Americans. It's like waving a red flag for a bull.

Now, I do think what's really interesting for Canada in this Venezuela situation is that of course, Carney has talked a lot about, you know, his whole strategy is diversifying Canada's economy away from the United States.

And we had a small measure of success in that respect in the time that he'd been in office. And he is going around the world trying to sign different kinds of trade agreements, open up different kinds of trade opportunities.

He set this meeting with Xi. Now this meeting has been planned for months now, and so I have to assume that, you know, many ministers have gone to China. I have to assume whatever Xi and Carney are going to agree on over the next couple of days has already been planned out. Venezuela must have dropped like a bomb in Ottawa because they must have been calibrated their agreements with China to what they thought the Americans would be willing to accept.

And now the National Security Strategy has come out, now the Americans have actually acted against Venezuela. And I'd be very curious to see if Canada finds that whatever it thought of calibrating to not offend the Americans too badly is no longer enough. I really think that Carney is in a very difficult position, of course, it goes without saying. We need China if we really wanna diversify our economy into Asia. I think he understands that.

This trade war with China, it's hurting Canadian fishers, it's hurting Canadian farmers. We're fighting it over an automobile industry that the Americans have explicitly told us they intend to have completely located in the United States, right? So they, they're giving us fair warning, they intend to move the entire auto industry into the United States. And if we're lucky, we might get a few dregs.

So what exactly are we fighting about? You know, what exactly is it we think we're protecting here?

But at the end of the day for Canada, it all comes down to CUSMA , right? The Canada, US, Mexico Free Trade Agreement. And after reading the National Security Strategy, I have absolutely no question that CUSMA is going to be, from an American perspective, it's going to be an effort to formalize the vassalage of Mexico and Canada to American interests.

There's a veto that the United States has over Canada entering a free trade agreement with any non-market economy, in the previous iteration of CUSMA . This next version, I'm sure is going to be pretty explicit and much more restricted. And I think at that point we're going to see what Mark Carney is really made of.

Is he going to go along with what the Americans are saying in the hopes of buying time until the next review of CUSMA comes up in another six years? Is he going to

stand his ground and say, I can't afford to lose six years of negotiating with other countries and being an American vassal?

I think the jury is really out. I think Carney is playing the hand that he's dealt and he's playing it pretty well. But I think the situation in which he's finding himself is changing and evolving and becoming more extreme practically every day. And how well we can negotiate that really depends on the amount of pain Canadian public is willing to take.

Because at the end of the day, to maintain Canadian sovereignty, Canada may need to crash out of CUSMA and that will be very, very painful.

I mean, as you know, to this point, 94% of Canada's trade with the United States is going in without tariffs. It's covered by CUSMA. But that's bought us time. And the Canadian economy is growing and we're adding jobs. Not a lot. Not growing a great deal. But, you know, the instability and uncertainty has been the bigger problem until now.

If we actually end up in a situation where CUSMA is gone or we have to make that trade off, we're entering a much deeper world of pain and I think Carney is going to have to really assess that. I don't know where it's gonna end.

**RESH:** Right. And this is why you have been advocating and writing that we really need to strengthen our ties with China. Just to say that you recently, I think it was in December, published a piece in Asia Times called, Canada's Time to Ditch the US and Go With China.

**SHAUN:** The argument I make is that the United States is in a precipitous decline. It's very powerful. It's very influential. It can do a lot of damage on the way down.

Vijay was talking about how they've gutted their universities.

They're getting rid of the Department of Education. They're, launching a war on science. I mean, these are all the things that you need to prosper and do well in the 21st century. These are all areas in which China in particular is excelling at the moment.

You know, just the situation with electric vehicles. The standard of EVs in China is exponentially better than anything we have here in North America. Canadians, if you want us to actually move into the 21st century, making some kind of a deal with China to access those kinds of technologies, those kinds of advantages, I think is fundamental to our own long-term prosperity as a country.

But I think at the same time, the United States is explicitly saying in the National Security Strategy, they intend to anchor the entire Western Hemisphere to the United States. And if the United States is going down and quite frankly given what's happening domestically, economically, socially, politically, I don't see how they're

gonna save themselves, they will suck us all down with them unless we actually do manage to diversify in a meaningful way.

So I think just from that point of view, Canada has a vested interest in trying to be more diversified. But we're getting the very clear, explicit signal that's not what the Americans have planned for us.

**RESH:** Yeah, absolutely. Now I wanna get into a little bit of historical context here.

This attack on Venezuela, it is the most serious of its kind this type of military incursion that Venezuela has ever experienced, but it's not the first intervention. Stephen Miller's statement was belligerent, but it was also remarkably honest about US foreign policy. Because the forward thrust of US foreign policy has really been in intervention around the world, very much in this region and for the last 25 years in Venezuela, since the start of the Bolivarian Revolution.

So Vijay, talk about the Bolivarian revolution and the interventions that it has faced.

**VIJAY:** It's very important for people to know that these are not country to country assaults. Like the problem the United States has is not with Cuba. The United States used to love Cuba.

It's like there's no problem with Iran. United States loved Iran. Iran was a major US ally till 1979.

It's not Venezuela. The United States had a very close relationship with Venezuela till 1998.

The problem is the Cuban revolution. The problem is the Iranian Revolution and then the Islamic Republic.

The problem is Hugo Chavez winning the election in 1998, and then, you know, launching the Bolivarian process with the new Constitution. These are political problems. These are not country to country, it's not a personal thing.

When Hugo Chavez wins the election, he does something pretty interesting.

It's 1998, the whole world is demoralized. Well at least the whole world of the Left is demoralized by the collapse of the Soviet Union, by the collapse of Eastern European states, a very large part of the Left Workers Movement demoralized by that. The special period in Cuba.

And here comes Hugo Chavez and starts talking again about socialism. Travels around the world saying, you know, we're gonna use the oil wealth to rebuild a socialist project within Venezuela and to support through PetroCarib, the structures of life in the Caribbean, particularly Haiti, which Venezuela owes a historical debt to.

We're going to use Venezuela's wealth to build regional integration in Latin America. We're gonna build this Bolivarian process. We don't want a free trade agreement with the United States. And he leads the charge to revive this sort of sovereignty discourse around the world.

Then in the middle of all that, the Venezuelan government passes the Hydrocarbon Law, the Organic Hydrocarbon Law in 2001, which doesn't nationalize the oil that's already done. That's not the question.

The question was, he said, we want a better deal from the oil conglomerates.

It was a pretty fair law if you go back and look at it, which I, I did recently. It's pretty fair. It's judicious comes from a long tradition of trying to say, look, it's our wealth, can we get a better deal?

In fact, Chevron, one of the oil conglomerates says, yeah, it's a pretty good deal, you know, we'll stay with it. It's ExxonMobil that says, no, this is outrageous. And it's the Canadian mining companies that absolutely lose their shit. Especially Barrick Gold's, Peter Munk.

And by the way, Peter Munk, I can't believe, University of Toronto School of International Studies named after that guy who is in favor of coup d'Etat and God knows what all.

2007, he writes a letter where he basically says, Hugo Chavez should be coup'd. Well, the US tried it already in 2002. In fact, he was removed from office. Popular upsurge, he was brought back in power.

From 2001, from the passage of the Organic Hydrocarbons Law till now Venezuela has faced an attack of different kinds. Attempt to overthrow the government by coup. Attempt to assassinate the leaders. Mercenaries sent to invade the country.

And then Barack Obama, you know, so-called Mr. Nice Guy signs an executive order in 2015 to strangle the country. In fact, you know, Donald Trump can turn around and say, you know, he signed the executive order, i'm just honoring it. I'm continuing the maximum pressure campaign.

Seizing Venezuelan assets, Bank of London seized \$1.5, \$1.8 trillion US depending on what the price of gold is today.

Seizing the IMF reserves of Venezuela. Venezuela's own money in the IMF. they could not get during the pandemic. During the pandemic, they were squeezed dry. I mean, it was really difficult.

All of this creates its own corruptions. Because if the State is sanctioned, then if you are a decent person running the State, you're going to have to open things to the private sector because otherwise your people are going to starve and die.

And so the "privatization" that takes place under Nicholas Maduro which did take place, is largely to protect the Venezuelan people from absolute chaos because the State was sanctioned. Same thing they did to Iran.

They sanctioned the State, knowing full well this means you open things up to the private sector and all its corruptions, and then you say, look, this is a corrupt government.

They have been fighting a war against Venezuela for a very long time. And this is not just the US war.

You know, Canada, and I'm saying this because you guys are in Canada. Canada is one of the most viciously corrupt societies because it's the home of mining companies which have a way of asserting themselves undemocratically over policy.

You know, when you talk about US-Canada trade. And I really appreciate the way Shaun laid that out.

You've gotta remember that the largest part of the trade is in goods. And one of the big sectors is energy. And energy means oil and natural gas. It means these large mining companies.

When you go to Perth in Western Australia. Why, what are the Canadians doing in Perth? Well, the big mining companies, you know, these just so happen to be Canadian.

So it's all right. You can say, look, thank God we're not the United States, but really, are you not?

The absolute inter-penetration between the US and Canadian conglomerates, when it comes to the subordination of countries in the Global South, whether it's in the Congo or in Zambia or other places, Canadian mining companies are right there at the table.

You know, so we should not also extricate, break this apart analytically. I mean, I would say the attempt to create new opportunities with China, for instance, we will have to go around the big mining companies because they are the ones who benefit the most from the trade agreement with the United States.

You wanna build high speed rail. You've been trying to build Alto between Toronto and Quebec somewhere. This high speed rail project with the French has been going on forever. If you made a deal with the Chinese, you'd have it in under a year.

**SHAUN:** Exactly. I agree with you completely. I mean, I was gonna say too, yeah, the mining companies are a particularly dark spot on the Canadian economic landscape. But I also agree that one of the big problems that any Canadian

government that wants to maintain Canadian sovereignty has to deal with is our private sector.

The Canadian business class is not necessarily gonna have any problem with selling Canada out to the United States. You know, in many ways the Canadian economy is already owned in very significant ways, like our oil and gas sector by American companies already.

Part of the reason that Trump insulting Canada is so pointless, right? Because you could just buy the country. We're more than happy to sell it all to you, you know, just don't insult to us while you're doing it.

**RESH:** Yeah. And just going back to Canada's role, in the Monroe doctrine?

The Monroe Doctrine is that US declaration, not law, declaration, that no other power, but the US as I think Shaun you were saying, has the right to intervene in and essentially police the Western Hemisphere. In practice this really has meant though nations south of the border. The northward direction is quite new, right?

Canada has been complicit Yes. In our mining companies, but also politically as well. I mean, we played quite a role in the Lima Group.

**VIJAY:** I would just like to say, I've never called it the Lima Group, I've always preferred to call it the Ottawa Group. Because the heart and soul of this was from Ottawa, not from Lima. I think they would've felt uncomfortable had it been named Ottawa Group. It would've felt like a northern domination of a Latin American country. So I think Peru was the fig leaf over the Canadian leadership to try to politically destabilize Venezuela.

**RESH:** Also, also before we go on, Chrystia Freeland, she played a pivotal role in this. She's just, announced that she's stepping down from Canadian politics and she's going to be the economic advisor to the Zelensky government. But yeah, Shaun, go ahead.

**SHAUN:** No, I don't have much to say about it other than to recognize that years ago when it first came into existence, I remember being very confused as to why it was that Canada was trying to play such an interventionary role in Venezuela.

But I'll tell you what I mean. Canada is interesting because my argument's always been, it's not like the United States goes around the world obeying international law.

It's not like the United States respects international law and the sovereignty of various countries. But it has recognized, it has a coterie, has a posse, a gang of countries around it who it's always recognized it needs to work with in order to maximize its influence in the world. And Canada has always been part of that gang.

So, Canada, geographically, we've been very lucky. We were an offshoot of the British Empire, you know the America of today and then we were an extension of the United States. So we benefited enormously from the fact that geographically we've been these extensions of the empire dominant at the time that Canada, what came into existence. \ The thing that with Canada is simply, we are shocked, just absolutely shocked that the Americans are now turning their sights on us.

You know, it's not like they haven't turned their sights on everybody else south of us. We just thought we were immune to this because we were part of the gang. And the Trump people are stupid enough, you know, to, to tear apart their own gang. Whereas all the previous American administrations understood that the best way to try to run the world is with your own mafia behind you.

And now they're blowing it up.

If you read the NSS, it's a document full of contradictions. But one of the interesting things is how it keeps talking about how the United States will work with its allies to achieve all of these various goals that ultimately amount to maintaining American domination.

And then as you pointed out, Stephen Miller gets up and basically says, we'll do whatever we want to do, the only thing that matters is power, allies suck. So they're contradicting themselves. There's no consistency here.

**RESH:** This really smacks of colonial arrogance, right? A racist colonial arrogance.

The Global North is fine with the Monroe Doctrine and the Donroe Doctrine when it's directed south, but real problem when it comes North. So now the next on the list is Greenland, that Trump says we're gonna take by money or military. Greenland is a self-governing territory of Denmark. It's a largely Inuit territory. It's basically caught between colonizers or potential colonizers right now.

But again, going back to this point that you made earlier, Shaun, that while the, the majority of the world, the Global South, has strongly condemned the US attack on Venezuela, in the Global North the response has been quite tepid. And as you said, this includes Mark Carney who reserved his harshest words for President Maduro. He said, "The removal of illegitimate corrupt, repressive government leader, Mr. Maduro, is welcome news". And this is echoed in the mainstream media as well as by of course, anti-Maduro Venezuelans because Venezuelans fall on both sides of this. And there are many pro-Maduro Venezuelans as well. Vijay, your response to this?

**VIJAY:** So firstly elections, I mean, it is a strange business that just before the kidnapping of Nicholas Maduro, Mr. Trump said that he was getting ready to pardon former Honduran President Hernandez, Joe, as he is known in Honduras, who is a convicted narco trafficker.

And you know, in Honduras there is a great furor about the election.

Elections or these sort of money contests are enormously contested around the world. I mean, every election seeks to have a contest.

United States is not immune from this, you know, the US Supreme Court had to enter, the election that was then delivered to George W. Bush.

It's not surprising that there are election malfeasance because there's a lot of money involved in elections. They're expensive. Moneyed interests want their person to win.

In Venezuela ever since the election of Mr. Hugo Chavez, the United States and its allies have intervened to try to influence elections. Just as Trump intervened in Argentina to warn Argentinians that if they didn't vote for Javier Milei's party in local elections, the United States was gonna cut the financial pipeline into Argentina. There is direct intervention into there. He told people who to vote for if they still wanted liquidity. That you can't have a much bigger intervention than that, perhaps a military intervention.

So US, in fact, created with its money, a group called Sumate in order to run a referendum to recall Hugo Chavez, that was run by a very young Maria Corina Machado and her friends in the rich parts of Caracas. They built this NGO with US funding. She has always been very open to US funding, very open to US assistance because she knows she can't build a mass political project.

You can't go to the Venezuelan people and say, vote for me, I want to bring the oil companies back. You're not going to win more than 25% to 30% of the vote. And by the way, most of the victories of the Bolivarians, you know, the Socialists have been tight. They've won 51%, 53%.

They are not like Paul Kagame in Rwanda.

You know, when you rig an election, you win 98%. You want a rigged election, you got, Mr. Sisi 96%, 97%. You got Saddam in the good old days, 99% of the electorate votes for you. Who rigs their election. 54% to 41%. It's not the way elections are rigged.

**VIJAY:** So Mr. Maduro has always won very tight against Henry Capriles in the 2014 election, the first election that he ran as a presidential candidate, Henry Capriles, who was the Governor of Miranda State, won 49%. Mr. Maduro won 51%. They have always been tight.

I've interviewed lots of opposition politicians in Venezuela, they tell you directly, we have a hard time going above 51% because the Chavista base always comes out and votes in large numbers.



Okay? There's always going to be irregularities here and there. Some ballot areas, some overzealous person of the Socialist Party sent in 20 extra people. That happens all over of all political areas. They often cancel each other out these little irregularities. You can't move an election by these kind of irregularities.

Systematic vote fraud, I very much doubt it. And if it was happening, these numbers don't show it.

80% For Eduardo Gonzalez, the proxy of Maria Corina Machado, I doubt that 80% of the electorate would have voted for a man who was an ambassador in the pre-Chavez era and was likely personally involved in torture of left-wing activists when he was in Central America. Most uninspiring candidate. I was there during the election campaign. That he got 41% is pretty amazing.

It's like in Chile. Jeannette Jara, the Communist candidate got 41%. I think that was an enormous achievement, you know, in a country that basically is a center-Right society.

Jose Antonio Cast won the election in Chile. Nobody's saying it was rigged. You know, it's the way the society is running. You can get a sense from the society,

Venezuela, it is hard to go to the people and say, vote against you owning mining wealth. Vote to give the gold back to Barrick Gold. It's not gonna happen.

Vote to allow Scotia Bank to come back to Venezuela. They had cut a deal with the pre-Chavez government. As The Globe and Mail wrote that when Chavez died, that Scotia Bank had been frozen out by Chavez in the 15 years after they signed the deals, frozen out.

Why? Because they have better rules of how foreign banks should operate in the country. Frozen out. Incredible, exercising their sovereignty over their banking system.

Petro Canada, Canada Petroleum, whatever it's called, based in Calgary, was extremely upset with the Hydrocarbon Laws like ExxonMobil.

You know, you go to the people and say, we want Canadian Petrol to come back and make huge amounts of money for the Canadian shareholders, not for you. You are not going to win an election, guys.

Okay. You don't like what Maduro and company are doing? They're trying to exercise sovereignty over their country.

Okay, Mark Carney, why did you steal the word sovereignty then for your Arctic report? Don't use the word *sovereignty*. Use *We want the Arctic to be explored by Canadian Corporations*, not owned by Canadian citizen. Be honest with your

language then. Don't use the word sovereignty, it's our word. Now you are appropriating the word from the Socialists. Sovereignty is our word.

Be honest with yourself. What you're saying is. Canada, I almost said Canayda like a good Punjabi. Canada's Arctic, say is for your conglomerates. It's for Petroleum Canada, it's for Scotia Bank, it's for Barrick Gold and so on. It's not for Canadian citizens. Come off it, be honest, Mark. You don't mean sovereignty. You are using our language.

**RESH:** Yeah. Since we're talking about the oil companies, right?

I mean, you talked about ExxonMobil and they said, you know, we don't want the deal that Venezuela is offering, so we're going to leave. And I just have to say, they went next door to Guyana and Rex Tillerson, who was the CEO of ExxonMobil and was also the Secretary of State for Trump in his first term, he played quite a role in writing Guyana's oil policy, which was great for the oil companies and terrible for Guyana. And Guyana continues to have this border dispute over the oil with Venezuela. But it's interesting what they wanted in Venezuela is what I think they, got in Guyana.

But Vijay, just to go back to you very quickly. This situation it's just changing almost, it seems hour by hour. Trump today he just posted a fake Wikipedia page of himself on his Truth Social that says, Donald Trump Acting President of Venezuela, and he's going to stop access to the oil revenues and all that.

So what is happening in Venezuela right now? Is there capitulation to the Trump demands? What's going on?

**VIJAY:** Firstly, I just want to say that I believe all three of us have our heritage in South Asia. And I just want to say for the record that it is deeply embarrassing to see Irfan Ali effectively just surrender Guyanese sovereignty to the oil companies.

And it is equally embarrassing to see Kamla Persad-Bissessar of Trinidad and Tobago. These are two people of South Asian heritage, like the three of us effectively just surrender their sovereignty to the Yankee and to say, you know, Mr. Trump, why don't you become the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, and I'll be your lackey.

Or, why don't you become the president of Guyana? Why are you stopping at the Acting President of Venezuela? We want to give you Guyana and Trinidad on a plate. And these are people with whom we share ancestry. We just wanna put that on the record, guys.

**SHAUN:** Vi

me Steven worse.

My family's from Guyana. We're 150 years, removed from India. I was last there in 2017. Yeah. Well, frankly, sorry, go on. I, I, I embarrassed by no, Indians at the moment, but

**VIJAY:** No, the, the greatest thing guy has done recently is Shamar Joseph. You produced one of the most electric fast bowlers that the West Indies has seen in a long time. But what else? I mean, definitely not Irfan Ali. it's a great shame in the legacy of Cheddi Jagan, but again, that's me just speaking now. Identity politics, guys. Sorry about that. I know you're not supposed to raise identity politics in this crude and vulgar way, but so be it.

In Venezuela, Delcy Rodriguez had to take over. She's the Vice President. It's the chain of , it's a hierarchy. You know, the President has been abducted. There is nothing in any constitution in the whole world that has a provision for when your President is abducted by aliens, which is exactly what the United States did.

They sent a UFO and abducted the President as if they were aliens. I mean, that's what it was like. Chinook helicopter just sitting there like a UFO.

No constitution in the world has a provision for this. You know, you have a provision from when the President or Prime Minister dies, or when they fall ill, or, you know. Incapacitated in a certain way. But nobody says what happens when your President is kidnapped, so they're making things up as they go.

Firstly, I would like to say that I know Delcy Rodriguez. I've done events with her. She and, and Nicolas Maduro come from the same political formation, which was created by her father, who was killed by the people who basically mentored Maria Corina Machado.

There is no way that Delcy Rodriguez made a deal for the extrication of Nicholas Madura. I think all those rumors are part of the information war that takes place to divide people, to create confusion in Venezuela and so on.

It is very significant that in her first public meeting, she was sitting right next to one of the people who is one of the six people on the US indictment, the leading Chavista figure who's a Minister of the Interior, Diosdado [Cabello] was sitting right next to her. You know, very important that she made that move. And also that she then went to a commune and said, we stand for the project of Chavismo and so on.

She's making it clear she's not gonna bow to the US. But at the same time, they don't want an attack that just vanishes Caracas, turns Caracas into Gaza. So I would completely understand if she says, let's negotiate, let's talk. And Trump, by the way, withdrew the second attack. He said, we can put it on the table, but he withdrew it.

The media is being extremely deceitful. New York Times ran a story saying that, you know, she's made a deal with the US military. I mean, all of this creates confusion in Venezuela. This is not to the US audience. This is to show to the US that Venezuela

has surrendered and inside Venezuela to delegitimize her so that there are all kinds of problems.

Because the military in Venezuela is super Chavista. You see them running around reciting things that Bolivar has said. It's really interesting how much emphasis they played.

You can be as Chavista as you want, you'll withstand an invasion. But again, if the US is bombing you from the sky, there's very little that a Chavista military can do. You don't have the kind of weapon systems you would require.

And it also shows you that this is not a multipolar world because the Chinese or Russians, nobody can come and save you.

You know, Russia had a military base in Syria, but they could not prevent the fall of the Assad government. They had a military base in Syria, they couldn't do anything. This is not a multipolar world.

Our thesis in Tri Continental was always that this is not a multipolar world. We have a new mood in the Global South, but that new mood is yet to exert itself beyond statements here and there. Very bold positions against the genocide.

Or even under Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia saying very openly, I condemn this kidnapping of Nicholas Maduro, right after Anwar Ibrahim was forced to make a really bad deal with Donald Trump on trade. You know, basically surrendering part of the Malaysian economy. But yet he comes back and he does. This shows the weakness of the new mood, not its absence.

You know, you can have a new mood present, but it can be weak. There's a difference between the presence of a new mood and its strength and weakness. You shouldn't misunderstand where we are. This is definitely not a multipolar anything, okay.

The Chinese highest representative was sitting in Caracas during the bombing. He had met Nicholas Maduro, he was the last foreign leader to meet Nicholas Maduro.

Xi Jinping's, basically his representative came to visit Mr. Maduro. The head of the Latin American office in the Foreign Ministry was there. His deputy was there. They meet Mr. Maduro. They go to sleep that night and the United States attack.

Like I said, on Chinese television, this is tantamount to the US-NATO bombing the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade.

If that was a humiliation in 1999. I would take this as a humiliation. But China couldn't stop it, you know? And that's really, really important for people to understand. There isn't a multipolar world, there's just a new mood in the Global South, but as of now, it's a little weak.

**RESH:** Right. We're seeing at the same time the decline of American hegemony. As we talked about hyper imperialism and the chaos and the contradictions that have become hallmarks of the Trump government. I mean, Just look at the last three weeks.

On Christmas Day, the US bombs Nigeria, they said in retaliation for attacks on Christians, nevermind US support for Israel's bombing of the birthplace of Jesus Christ over the last two years. The US is threatening military strikes on Iran if any harm comes to anti-government protestors and that situation is blowing up right now, but the US is also now arresting and shooting those who are protesting ICE raids in America. Vijay, y you brought up Trump arrests Maduro on these charges, but after hosting Netanyahu at Mar-a-Lago in December, despite the international warrant out for his arrest for crimes against humanity. But again, here you have Nigeria, Iran, Venezuela, and Canada, that all sit on some of the world's largest proven oil reserves. Again, clearly about oil. O on Venezuela, the US says we control the oil, we run the oil, we're gonna control all trade and Trump himself will oversee all oil revenues, right? Shaun, is this possible and what are the implications for the Canadian economy now? Because what is it, it's about 80% or more of our crude goes to the US.

It was really interesting that Pierre Poilievre, who's the leader of our Conservative party, and he's the oil and gas politician, was rah rah rah for this attack on Venezuela. But is that such a good thing just in terms of our oil industry?

**SHAUN:** In fact, I think the oil companies that operate in the Tar Sands of Alberta, I saw a slight decline in their stock prices, you know, when the Venezuelan oil supposedly comes online.

The stock market's not a good measure very much frankly. And in this particular instance, I mean, the Venezuelan oil, is not going to be available if ever for a very long time. Trump had his meeting with the oil executives at the White House and they told him we're not interested in going in, right. It's uninvestible. They have to spend at least a hundred billion dollars. It's very thick oil. In fact, it's very similar to the Tar Sands, right? And people have said, well, look, American refineries that were designed to handle Canadian oil will be ideally suited for Venezuelan oil. But you're not gonna get more than a million barrels of oil even, or even less outta Venezuela for a long time to come. So I don't think it's gonna have that much impact on Canada from that perspective.

Perhaps I'm being somewhat optimistic here.

But the other thing to keep in mind is that oil as a fuel is I think very definitely declining in value and prevalence. You know, I think last year may well have been peak oil. Over the past few months I think Chinese renewable energies have been sold more than \$40 billion more in the sale of Chinese renewable energies from the world than American oil. A lot of countries in the Global South are looking at renewable energy and solar panels and wind as first off, right now it's the most affordable form of energy.

You buy a solar panel and it's yours for 25 years. Nobody can take it away from you. You throw in Chinese technology on batteries. I think the age of renewable energy is here and the Americans are doubling down on going exactly in the wrong direction. So, from that point of view, from a Canadian point of view, you know, 7% of our GDP is linked to the oil sands, the tar sands.

The more we link our economy to that kind of fuel. I think the more we, we,, as Mark Carney himself has said, we strand our resources. We're investing billions of dollars in things that will not have that long a shelf life for that much longer. So from that point of view, I think that the Venezuela situation is not gonna have that much of an impact on Canada's economy. In fact, some of the things we're doing in our economy are more disadvantageous to us than anything that would happen with Venezuela.

I want to address something that Vijay was saying though I found really interesting. I agree with you Vijay, that we're not in a multipolar world. But at the same time, the American use of force and violence, you know, the Americans can break a lot of things, but it also strikes me as being somewhat desperate.

You're using force, you're using violence. You're frightening people, you're cowing people. But in the New York Times this morning, there was an article by a fellow from Responsible Statecraft, the Quincy School. And he was making the argument that even as countries are responding to American tariffs and American violence and American kidnapping of leaders in fairly reserved ways, they're also continuing to build a globalized world where they're continuing to develop trade arrangements and other kinds of arrangements working around the United States.

And I do think that what's happening might be a very slow motion, tentative response to what's happening with the US.

You raise Malaysia. I was at a conference in Ottawa few months ago, and the Malaysian high commissioner was there. And the agreement that Anwar had signed came up. And of course, everyone said, Malaysia's giving away it's economic sovereignty, it's rare earth minerals, et cetera, to the United States. And she said, well, look, we know how to deal with this.

Now this may simply have been sort of blowing smoke, right? You don't wanna admit that you've actually made a bad deal.

On the other hand, what she was suggesting is that there are a lot of different ways to skin a cat. And that we say one thing to the Americans, but we have other ways of making other things happen. I don't know that that's true.

I followed up a little bit on the Malaysian Agreement and the Chinese have responded to it by saying, look, you basically are relying on us to get these rare earth minerals out and process them. We're not gonna do that if you're trying to cut us out. And Malaysia is stuck. You know, you can't do any of this stuff without China.

**SHAUN:** So if the Malaysians are gonna finesse this, they're gonna finesse it in a way I don't quite see at the moment. But I thought that was an interesting response, that they're quite aware of this idea of balance, saying what they need to say to the Americans, but trying to find other ways to continue pursuing what is their national interest.

I think that might be the kind of world we're heading into. One that's much more complex in how different powers manage their relations with these much larger entities.

**RESH:** Right. And I, I just want to then on that pose a final question into where we are heading. So, as we're dealing with this time of hyper imperialism, where do you see us going?

Will it slow the movement away from US hegemony, or is it going to accelerate it? And what are people doing in terms of resisting this hyper imperialism? Vijay, you're part of the global solidarity movement against this.

So where is this going and how can people resist?

**VIJAY:** Part of it comes down to building an imagination of the world that's already being shaped. You know, it is pretty incredible when you travel to Asia and when you get on a Chinese high-speed rail, it's incredible.

Like, I've been to China since the 1980s when you had diesel buses spewing smoke and suddenly Beijing's sky is much cleaner. The air is cleaner. Houhai Lake has been completely cleaned up. These things are pretty incredible what they're doing.

Shanghai, you, go there and you can't hear cars because so many of them are electric. It's the center of electric automobiles in the world. You know, we want more electric buses, electric cars, more public transport. These are real debates taking place across Asia, not just in China, across Asia.

And so the question to ask is, do you want to be the country that can blow up trains in other countries or do you want to be the country that can build them?

Does the United States want a train that connects New York City to San Francisco? All stops in between and really fast, doesn't break down. Do you want to have a civilization where people don't live on the streets anymore. I mean, these are compelling questions for humanity.

Like what's more important, having a strong military, spending 5% of your GDP on the military, so you can be a good standing member of NATO or having a functional school system?

You know what's happening to places like Canada. Everything is being destroyed. Your healthcare, your school systems, your public transportation, these are real serious civilizational choices.

What's more important to strut around on the big stage saying that we have an aircraft carrier or to say that we don't have poverty anymore?

Only two places in the world have eradicated absolute poverty. One of them is China and the other is the Indian state of Kerala.

Big surprise that both of them governed by left-wing governments.

People say, oh, well China is not a socialist country. I'm like, well they've abolished absolute poverty. What has your government done?

You know, if Canada abolishes absolute poverty, and if I come to Toronto someday and there's no homeless person sleeping in a box, I will say this civilization is advancing in the correct direction.

It's not about having the best bomber, or the best ability to mine something. It's about not having poverty, not having homeless people.

Perth one more mining capital of the world, homeless people all over and just so happens that they're aboriginal, Indigenous Australians.

What the hell is that? That's not a civilization. You've collapsed.

**SHAUN:** I totally agree with what Vijay is saying.

I mean, as a Canadian, I'm looking at this ridiculous promise of 5% spending on the military.

And of course, the obvious question is what do we give up in order to have this useless, pointless military against but frankly, the biggest threat that we face is the United States. And if the Americans ever invade us, if we don't fight an insurgency, we're just gonna be taken over.

But that's neither here nor there.

Part of what's happening, I think, is that the western world for the first time in several hundred years is on the way down, right? It's not controlling the world system anymore. And it doesn't know how to deal with that.

The Americans are an extreme case of this, but all across the West, right? There is an aversion to the reality that Asia is on the rise. And I think China is playing a very different game, but also the very long game.



Whereas the Americans don't seem to have the resources or the interest in building infrastructure and going into countries and actually giving them, helping them develop things that are going to be useful and valuable to the population as a whole. The Chinese are doing exactly that. That's how they are playing their game.

And I think they have a certain level of confidence that over time this will build for them the ties and relationships that they need. So they don't have a huge amount of soft power right now. But of course the Americans are in the process of destroying their own soft power at the same time that they're in the process of bombing everything in sight. And I think the Chinese perspective, maybe the Asian perspective in general, is over a longer timeframe they don't see the point.

Occasionally I'm irritated with China. Because the Americans withdrew from 66 treaties and organizations a few days ago, and everyone's saying, you know, this gives China this wonderful opening to move in.

And I kind of wish. I'm waiting for the Chinese to fill these gaps. 'cause many times I think that they don't.

Part of it I think is China's own sense of restraint. In some ways they've learned from the Americans. You know, even if they had an inclination to intervene, they learned from American interventions that it never works out the way you want it to.

But I think there's also just an inclination, their approach to these things to say, history acts out and development occurs over longer timeframes.

You let people develop at their own rate in their own way, and you help them along that path. And I think that is the sort of slow evolution that they're encouraging. And I think in a general sense in the Global South, people are more appreciative of that.

And as the world shifts, as power begins to shift away from the West to the Global South, that particular approach will have a longer term consequences. It will work for the Chinese and maybe other Asian states at the end.

**RESH:** And with that, Vijay and Shaun, thank you so much for an excellent conversation. It has been a pleasure.

**SHAUN:** Thank you very much, Vijay, it was good meeting you..

**VIJAY:** Thanks a lot.

**RESH:** That was Vijay Prashad, journalist, author and Director of the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research and Shaun Narine, Professor of International Relations at St. Thomas University.

And this is The Courage My Friends podcast.

I'm your host, Resh Budhu. Thanks for listening.

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