

# Venezuela

## Key facts in 1929

**Area:** 912,050 km<sup>2</sup><sup>[1]</sup>

**Population:** 2.5 Million<sup>[2]</sup>

**Life expectancy:** 32 years<sup>[3]</sup>

**Literacy rate:** 36,0%<sup>[4]</sup>

**Biggest Minorities:** Indigenous peoples, Afro-Venezuelans<sup>[2]</sup>

**Select Main Cities:** Caracas, Maracaibo, Valencia, Barquisimeto, Maracay<sup>[1]</sup>

**Neighboring countries:** Colombia, Brazil, Guyana<sup>[1]</sup>

**Sea Access:** Yes, Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean

**GDP:** 1'500'000'000 \$1929<sup>[5,6]</sup>

## Recent Historical Background

In the years leading up to 1929, Venezuela was under the dictatorial rule of Juan Vicente Gómez, who came to power in 1908 after a short period of liberal rule in 1899-1908<sup>[7,8]</sup>. His regime was marked by a focus on modernizing the country's infrastructure and economy, heavily relying on the burgeoning oil industry, which began to transform Venezuela into a major oil exporter in the early 20th century. Despite these economic advancements, Gómez's rule was also characterized by political repression and limited political freedoms. The discovery and exploitation of oil significantly impacted Venezuelan society and economy, laying the groundwork for its future as a major oil-producing country.<sup>[8]</sup> Besides this, Venezuela suffered an influenza pandemic in 1918, killing between 25'000 and 80'000 people.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Political Situation

In 1929, Venezuela was an authoritarian regime focused on centralization and control, with an emphasis on economic development through oil production. It was led by president Juan Vicente Gómez and did not have significant opposition due to repressive government policies. Its key internal problems included social inequalities as well as the suppression of political freedom.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Economic Situation in 1929

In 1929, Venezuela's economy was heavily reliant on oil, having discovered vast oil reserves in the early 20th century. This resource dominated its exports and shaped its economic landscape.<sup>[10,11]</sup> The country was in the early stages of industrialization, with the oil industry acting as the catalyst for this transition from an agrarian economy. Due to a weakening agricultural sector, Venezuela was not entirely self-sufficient in terms of food production, thus relying on imports to meet its population's needs.<sup>[11,12]</sup> Venezuela's Main exports were oil and its



derivatives, while imports included foodstuffs and industrial products. Venezuela traded primarily with the United States and European countries, using the Venezuelan Bolívar, pegged to major currencies like the US dollar. Major industrial hubs were centered around oil extraction sites, such as Maracaibo and the eastern part of the country, with infrastructure developing to connect these areas to ports for export.<sup>[13]</sup> Meanwhile, the economic system was heavily influenced by foreign investment, particularly from American and European oil companies.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Military Strength in 1929

The Venezuelan Army of 1929 was relatively weak. It did not have highly advanced technology and was very dependent upon foreign technology, which was mostly imported from the United States and from Europe. Venezuela's military doctrine at that state was to hold a small military force focused on internal security as well as defense.<sup>[15]</sup> It therefore only was commanding 6'000 people in its military, with a modest funding estimated at 6'000'000 Dollars of 1929<sup>[16,17,18]</sup> It also only had four gunboats, and a very limited amount of planes.<sup>[19,20]</sup>

<b>Key Facts about Military Strength of Venezuela</b> <sup>[16,17,18,19,20,21]</sup>	
Active personnel	6'000
Tanks	Unknown
Cavalry	Unknown
Other vehicles	Unknown
Ships	4
Planes	>12
Funding in 1929\$	6'000'000

## Allies/Enemies/Existing territorial disputes in 1929

Main Allies: The United States was a significant ally, primarily due to American interests in Venezuela's burgeoning oil industry.<sup>[22]</sup>

Main Enemies: Venezuela did not have explicit "enemies" in the traditional sense during this period, but relations with neighboring countries were cautious due to historical border disputes.

Territorial Disputes: Ongoing border disputes with Colombia over the Los Monjes Archipelago and with Guyana over the Essequibo region, a dispute that dates back to colonial times and was not actively militarized but remained a diplomatic issue.<sup>[23,24]</sup>

## Some of the Main Goals for the 1930s

1. Economic Diversification: Despite the booming oil industry, there was a need to diversify the economy to reduce dependence on a single export commodity.
2. Political Stability: After years of political turmoil, establishing a stable and effective governance structure was a priority.
3. Infrastructure Development: With the influx of oil revenue, there was a significant focus on improving infrastructure, including roads, ports, and urban development, to support economic growth.

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