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The Donroe Doctrine: The Restoration of American Dominance in the Western Hemisphere

By Darren Spinck

Introduction

America's Monroe Doctrine is often mischaracterized as an early expression of US imperial ambition. Diplomatic historian Walter LaFeber argued that the Doctrine became a foundation for American expansionism, while Arthur Schlesinger wrote that it evolved from a policy of protection against European encroachment into a tool of coercion over Latin America. These interpretations, however, largely reflect how the Doctrine was later implemented,

rather than the original purpose of the Doctrine. As historian Jay Sexton has noted, the Monroe Doctrine initially addressed three interconnected US objectives: independence from Britain, nation building, and the long-term ambition of American empire. In this sense, the Doctrine was mostly a defensive policy by a nascent republic that laid the groundwork for a later US sphere of influence. The Doctrine articulated by President James Monroe in his 1823 annual address to Congress

was rooted in America's strategic vulnerability, not territorial ambition. It was intended to deter renewed European colonization and great power interference in the Western Hemisphere at a time when the United States lacked both the military capability and diplomatic leverage to enforce its national interests. Its premise was narrow in scope in 1823: the Western Hemisphere would be closed to further European colonization, and any attempt by external powers to reassert imperial control over newly independent states in the Americas would be treated as a hostile act against the United States. In return, Washington pledged non-interference in European domestic affairs and wars.

Less than a half century after it declared its independence, the United States still lacked the military power to enforce its hemispheric defense on its own. It largely relied upon British naval supremacy, as London shared America's interest in preventing the re-colonization of Latin America by Spain, France, or the counterrevolutionary Holy Alliance. The Monroe Doctrine essentially articulated a future sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere for America before Washington possessed the capacity to defend it. Only later, under vastly different material and geopolitical conditions, did it evolve into a policy for leverage and hemispheric dominance as American power expanded. The doctrine's meaning shifted decisively under President Theodore Roosevelt, who introduced the Roosevelt Corollary in 1904. Roosevelt believed that political instability or economic crisis in Latin American states could justify American "international police power" to preempt European involvement. This reinterpretation resulted in US interventions in the Caribbean and Central America, to this day.

During the Cold War, the Monroe Doctrine was transformed again, but this time as an anti-communist containment framework. The Kennedy administration invoked it during the Cuban Missile Crisis to justify the exclusion of Soviet strategic assets from the Western Hemisphere. Throughout the 1960s–1980s, successive US presidential administrations viewed left-wing governments and insurgencies in Latin America as indirect extensions of Soviet power, using the doctrine as political justification for regime change operations, proxy wars, and security assistance programs. During the Cold War, the doctrine focused as much on ideological alignment as it did on sovereignty. The 1983 intervention in Grenada and the 1989 US invasion of Panama to remove Manuel Noriega were both justified as measures consistent with long-standing doctrines of regional defense. The US war on drugs likewise functioned as a *de facto* Monroe-style enforcement regime, driving sustained US military and security engagement across Colombia, Mexico, and Central America through initiatives such as Plan Colombia, Merida, and long-running counter-narcotics basing and advisory missions.

After the Cold War, the Monroe Doctrine's relevance appeared to wane. The Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations largely abandoned Monroe Doctrine policy objectives, replacing it with America's neoliberal pursuit of multilateralism, democracy promotion, and globalization. America's focus largely turned from its own backyard to military adventurism in the Balkans, Middle East, and elsewhere. Yet, in practice, Washington continued to treat the hemisphere as America's privileged strategic zone, intervening diplomatically and economically, and likely covertly as well, when governments diverged too far from US national

security interests. More problematic for American national interests, however, was that as America sought to compete in an increasingly globalized world, Washington tolerated the steady expansion of Chinese commercial influence under the naive assumption that deepening economic interdependence would align with and ultimately serve US strategic interests. This assumption collapsed during the 2010s. The rapid expansion of Chinese infrastructure development finance, telecommunications networks, port acquisitions, and energy sector investment across Latin America yet again reframed the Monroe Doctrine. The first Trump administration made this shift clear. Then National Security Advisor John Bolton stated in 2019 that the Monroe Doctrine was “alive and well,” signaling that Washington now viewed Chinese and Russian economic and political influence in the hemisphere as functionally equivalent to earlier European imperial encroachment. This paper looks into the 21st century Monroe Doctrine that now focuses on financial leverage, supply chain securitization, advanced technology infrastructure, and energy dominance. The Monroe Doctrine pivoted from a doctrine about territorial control into one about ports, pipelines, data centers, and rare earths. US President Trump’s second administration has not only revived the Monroe Doctrine again but fundamentally redefined it into a post-globalization framework for economic statecraft, geopolitical countering, and strategic re-ordering of the Western Hemisphere.

Trump Corollary

The Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine

was established in the Trump Administration’s 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS) as a core element of US hemispheric defense. The NSS elevates what was historically a geographic warning against European intervention into a comprehensive doctrine for restoring US dominance in the Western Hemisphere. Instead of treating the Americas as one of many regional concerns, the 2025 NSS makes the Western Hemisphere the preeminent security priority, linking its defense directly to US national security and economic prosperity. This marks a shift in which hemispheric primacy becomes both a strategy and a justification for policy initiatives across defense, economic, and diplomatic spheres.

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The NSS language is unambiguous: the United States will “reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere, and to protect our homeland and our access to key geographies throughout the region.” This language reinterprets the Monroe Doctrine from its 19th century role as a warning to European powers into a modern security strategy that explicitly treats great power competition in the hemisphere as a threat to US security. The Strategy further clarifies that America will “deny non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to position forces or other

threatening capabilities, or to own or control strategically vital assets in our Hemisphere," elevating economic and infrastructure influence alongside military threats. This NSS construction is the core of what defense analysts have identified as the Trump Corollary. Commentator Anthony Constantini defines the Trump Corollary as a revitalization and expansion of the Monroe Doctrine to a post-Cold War, multipolar global context. He argues that this Corollary rests on two pillars: first, that no external power should gain meaningful influence, including economic influence, in the Americas; and second, that no external power should achieve primacy in key global oceans essential to American security. The first pillar reflects the NSS's expanded threat definition beyond traditional military basing to include *economic footholds*, while the second reinforces naval and maritime dominance as critical to US strategic denial.

 **National Defense Strategy**
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Constantini's analysis highlights that the 2025 NSS makes hemispheric security concerns distinct from previous US presidential administrations by elevating them to core national strategy, rather than treating them as peripheral regional issues. This evolution positions hemispheric defense not merely as a regional priority but as a core requirement for US national security in a multipolar world. Crucially, the NSS's integration of economic influence aligns with broader

historical precedent, which is modern great power competition often unfolds as a struggle over infrastructure, technology, and commercial control as much as traditional military presence. The Danube Institute's Carlos Roa believes the NSS's "Trump Corollary" signals a substantive shift in US strategy. Roa states that the 2025 NSS abandons the liberal internationalist framework of the post-Cold War presidencies in favor of a "transactional imperialism" that embraces hemispheric primacy as a method of securing US survival and economic renewal. He writes that the NSS not only calls for dominance in the Western Hemisphere but also integrates economic nationalism and strategic consolidation as complementary to that dominance. For Roa, the Strategy's emphasis on controlling migration, combating so-called "narco-terrorists," and assuring US dominance through a Trump Corollary reflects *a prioritization of security close to home over global alliance systems*.

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The NSS's hemispheric focus outlines how future US policy will align, including future force posture adjustments which will reflect "urgent threats in our Hemisphere," guiding both the National Defense Strategy and future resource allocations. This shift reflects past historical patterns in American grand strategy, where geographic proximity often shapes

threat perception, as well as updates it for a world where influence is exerted through the commercial policies of US competitors as much as through bases or troop deployments. The National Defense Strategy, released in January 2026, reinforces this hemispheric prioritization. It states that the United States "will actively and fearlessly defend America's interests throughout the Western Hemisphere," making clear that hemispheric defense is now the core principle of US force posture and military planning. President Trump himself has pointed to this strategic reorientation in his remarks, once referring to the revived doctrine as the "Donroe Doctrine," reflecting an effort to modernize the Monroe Doctrine for today's great power competition. The political branding frames the Western Hemisphere as not only a zone of America's security interest but a priority sphere that the United States must actively control against rival influence by China, Russia, or other external powers.

Venezuela

The January 3, 2026 operation that resulted in the capture and arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro was the first concrete implementation of what the White House now terms the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. In a matter of hours, US forces executed Operation Absolute Resolve, extracting Maduro and his wife from Caracas and transferring them to the United States to face narcotics and weapons-related charges in New York. The operation's swiftness, precision, and lack of US casualties demonstrated not only the capabilities at Washington's disposal but the Trump Administration's broader strategic intent, which is the United States was prepared

to enforce its hemispheric hegemony kinetically and directly.



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The capture of Maduro was the first real-world test of the Trump Corollary, demonstrating that US hemispheric dominance must be actively enforced against perceived threats, whether ideological, military, criminal, or geopolitical. The 21st century policy of *active security engagement* in the Western Hemisphere includes President Trump's bold statement that the United States would "run" Venezuela until a transition could be established. While this statement was a clear indication that the US intends to maintain leverage on the ground, it is not clear how Washington can effectively manage Venezuela's day to day operations. The Maduro arrest was also a message to the major strategic competitors that have encroached on Washington's traditional sphere of influence. Russia, China, and Iran have all cultivated ties in Latin America in recent years, with Moscow solidifying military cooperation and energy cooperation, Beijing financing infrastructure projects and other regional development, and Tehran strengthening diplomatic alignment through arms sales. The forcible removal of a sitting Latin American president who maintained deep economic and political relationships with these capitals was an unmistakable message from the United States, that it views this region as a strategic priority and the presence of its competitors is a *threat to American interests*.

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For China in particular, the operation may disrupt Beijing's access to resources and strategic footholds in the hemisphere. The Trump administration has since moved to structure Venezuelan oil sales in ways that redirect revenue flows toward US markets and away from the deeply discounted arrangements that Maduro's government fostered with Chinese importers. Russia similarly faces a recalibration of its regional strategy, with the Kremlin likely interpreting the US move as a challenge to its geopolitical reach. Equally significant was how the Maduro operation communicated to European governments that US strategic priorities have shifted away from its role as Europe's primary security guarantor toward a narrower focus on hemispheric defense. European capitals, already wary of Washington's transactional approach to NATO and global security, may interpret the US action as a sign that the United States will defend what it considers its sphere of influence with heightened prioritization. For many in Europe, the raid was a reminder that American defense commitments are increasingly unilateral when core US interests are perceived to be at stake, which may complicate transatlantic cooperation on broader security matters.

Finally, the operation illustrates how far US policy has moved from traditional hemispheric defense into a posture that resembles *empire by enforcement*. The historical Monroe Doctrine was defensive and reactive, aimed at deterring European intervention. The Trump Corollary, by

contrast, orients the United States as the chief arbiter of political outcomes in its hemisphere. Washington can be expected to become increasingly willing to modify regimes as needed to ensure relative compliance, control commercial resources and shape regional cooperation amongst sovereign governments. Arresting Maduro was a demonstration of American primacy and of Washington's intention to extend US influence deep into the political and economic affairs of its neighbors.

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Conclusion

The Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine represents the integration of America's hemispheric defense into US grand strategy. It is an effort to modernize a historical doctrine to counter modern geopolitical competition. By treating economic influence, infrastructure control, and strategic asset ownership as matters of national security, the NSS sets out to ensure that no competitor can attain sufficient leverage to challenge US primacy in the Western Hemisphere. Nowhere were the Trump Corollary's objectives made more visible than in the events surrounding the 2026 World Economic Forum

in Davos and the diplomatic repercussions that followed. The controversy over Greenland, where the United States sought to restructure security and economic access rights with Denmark and Arctic partners, demonstrated to allies and adversaries alike that Washington views strategic perimeters in its near abroad as non-negotiable. The debate over Greenland's status triggered pushback from European capitals and from Canada, whose prime minister explicitly stated that "the future of Greenland is a decision for Greenland and for the Kingdom of Denmark," highlighting a divergence with US unilateralism even as NORAD cooperation continues in parallel.

Shortly before Davos, Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney traveled to Beijing and announced a new strategic partnership with China aimed at strengthening trade, energy cooperation, and multilateral governance mechanisms. Carney framed Canada's relationship with China as a response to a rapidly changing global economy and a shifting international order, arguing that Canada must diversify its partnerships and investment networks for future resilience. Carney's remarks and Ottawa's strategic partnership with Beijing illustrate the constraints the Trump Corollary is creating among US neighbors. Ottawa's outreach to Beijing does not simply reflect economic diversification but represents a strategic hedging against what many in Canada see as an increasingly assertive United States. From America seeking strategic basing arrangements in Greenland to the White House's tariff threats and hemispheric prioritization, Canada is recalibrating its diplomatic and economic alignment in light of what it perceives as American unilateralism. This shift comes at a time when other neighbors face increasing exposure to the enforcement

of the Trump Corollary. In the Caribbean and Latin America, the Trump Administration's actions against Venezuela and its drug trafficking networks have been interpreted as foreshadowing future operations. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's public statements that Cuba could be next in line for heightened Washington pressure or intervention signal that Washington's hemispheric security policies may soon extend to Havana, given the island's deepening economic and security ties with Russia and China.

North of the US border, Canada's strategic autonomy push has complicated the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) review, with Washington possibly conditioning preferential access on stricter screening of foreign investments, especially those linked to Chinese state-owned enterprises. In Mexico, the administration has hinted at authorizing strikes against cartel leadership targets, and the US military has struck drug trafficking vessels in the Caribbean and Pacific. These actions reveal a merger of migration control, counter-narcotics operations, and hemispheric security, blurring the lines between domestic law enforcement and defense operations. Looking forward, the next pivot point of the Trump Corollary is likely to be supply chains and trade corridor securitization. The NSS has already flagged ports, rail networks, data centers, energy grids, and rare earth supply chains as strategic assets whose ownership and governance should align with US interests. This will likely lead to deeper engagement in the Panama Canal's management, expanded presence in Mexican and Caribbean port facilities, and targeted diplomatic and economic commercial deals for South American lithium and rare earth mining. Hemispheric defense in the coming decade

will also encompass emerging threats such as hypersonic strike capabilities of adversaries, which require an integrated defense network spanning early warning, missile denial, and forward basing.

Finally, securing diversified rare earth supplies will become central to restricting the upstream inputs necessary for competitor dominance in the artificial intelligence value chain. Greenland, Canada, Brazil, and potential partnerships in South America could form a strategic network that, if successfully aligned under US leadership, could lock down material flows essential to advanced manufacturing and next generation technology. The Trump Corollary will not merely revive the Monroe Doctrine but will transform it from a declaratory warning from the 1800s into policy enforcement to boost American primacy through asset control and economic leverage.

Sovereignty, trade access, and political autonomy in the Western Hemisphere may become increasingly contingent on alignment with US security priorities. The Trump Administration will not allow the Western Hemisphere left to the vagaries of multilateralism or regional consensus. Instead, it faces hardening into a strategic perimeter, one that reflects both the threats of today and geopolitical challenges of the future.

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