



## **Policy Compass**

# **Making the Americas “American” Again: The Donroe Doctrine**

**By**

**Marina Tovar**



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*For information about Rosa&Roubini Associates, please send an email to [info@rosa-roubini-associates.com](mailto:info@rosa-roubini-associates.com) or call +44 (0)20 7101 0718.*

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Marina Tovar

### ***Making the Americas “American” Again: The Monroe Doctrine***

**21 January 2025**

#### **Executive Summary**

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- ▷ Revival and reinterpretation of the Monroe Doctrine: The Monroe Doctrine revives the Monroe Doctrine to justify a coercive US strategy based on military force, sanctions, and political control over the Western Hemisphere.
- ▷ Trump formalised this approach in the 2025 National Security Strategy, which explicitly rejects non-hemispheric influence, like China and Russia, and legitimises direct interventions.
- ▷ Erratic re-orientation driven by domestic politics: Rather than responding to external threats, Trump's corollary reflects internal US dynamics, including the resurgence of conservative nationalism, backlash against globalisation, and a worldview centred on spheres of influence.
- ▷ Unlike the 1823 doctrine's protective logic, Latin America is reframed as an arena for power competition and a strategic 'safe haven' for a US struggling to compete with China, signalling not isolationism but an aggressive and unstable re-regionalisation strategy.

#### **Key Picture: Strategic Goal Framework from 2026-2030**

<b>Goal 1: U.S. National Sovereignty</b>		
<b>Objective 1.1:</b> Secure America's borders and the American people's right to decide who to admit and on what terms.	<b>Objective 1.2:</b> Ensure all Americans can exercise their rights free from foreign interference.	<b>Objective 1.3:</b> Engage in international organizations only when it advances America's national interests.
<b>Goal 2: The Western Hemisphere and Establishment of the Monroe Doctrine</b>		
<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Counter and reverse our competitors' influence in the Western Hemisphere.	<b>Objective 2.2:</b> Strengthen strategic partnerships in the Western Hemisphere.	<b>Objective 2.3:</b> Suppress narco-terrorist gangs and cartels.
<b>Goal 3: Peace and Stability in the Indo-Pacific Region</b>		
<b>Objective 3.1:</b> Strengthen the Indo-Pacific economic system to support U.S. reindustrialization and reinforce ties with allies.	<b>Objective 3.2:</b> Deter aggression and establish favorable military balance across the region.	
<b>Goal 4: Rebuild the Civilizational Alliance with European States</b>		
<b>Objective 4.1:</b> Transfer primary responsibility for conventional European defense to allies and expand our joint defense industrial base	<b>Objective 4.2:</b> Rebalance U.S. trade with European allies and decrease their economic dependencies on adversarial powers.	<b>Objective 4.3:</b> Defend civilizational values and reassert national sovereignty.
<b>Goal 5: U.S. Economic and Technological Dominance</b>		
<b>Objective 5.1:</b> Reindustrialize the United States.	<b>Objective 5.2:</b> Stop foreign actors' abuse of the global trading system.	<b>Objective 5.3:</b> Drive the United States's strategic leverage by increasing U.S. exports and investment.
<b>Objective 5.4:</b> Strengthen U.S. technological edge and industry dominance.		
<b>Goal 6: Targeted Foreign Assistance that Puts American Interests First</b>		
<b>Objective 6.1:</b> Leverage assistance as a tool of statecraft.	<b>Objective 6.2:</b> Promote and provide trade, not aid.	

Source: [U.S Department of State](#)

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## 1. Background: the Monroe Doctrine

In late 2025 and early 2026, the US foreign policy shifted towards an ‘only sticks and no carrots’ approach to assert its dominance in Latin America. In the press conference following the capture of Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro, Trump mentioned the Monroe Doctrine, ‘his vision of a US superpower that could assert its military might to conquer the Western Hemisphere’, inspired by 19<sup>th</sup>-century Monroe doctrine. Citing the new US National Security Strategy, Trump is willing to assert dominance over the Western Hemisphere, or as he rather calls it, ‘his’ hemisphere.

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To set the scene, the Monroe Doctrine, announced by US President James Monroe in 1823, advocated for the non-intervention of European powers in the American continent, where the US would defend the Americas from other foreign powers in a context where these states were gaining independence. Through this doctrine, America has exerted its political hegemony and imperialism in the region, acquiring territories like Puerto Rico and Hawaii. Since the Monroe Doctrine was created, several corollaries emerged. Corollaries are amendments to the doctrine; that is, each President’s interpretation of the original doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine’s openness and ambiguity have allowed Presidents to utilise it in foreign policy as they see fit. For example, the Roosevelt Corollary legitimised the US’s intervention in the Americas, advocating for the US’s rein in the region.

## 2. 2025 US National Security Strategy: theory and practice

The US released in November 2025 its National Security Strategy (NSS), institutionalising the shift towards the Western Hemisphere. Compared to the Biden administration’s NSS released in 2022, which centres on China-Russia competition, Trump’s NSS focuses its attention on the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine’s importance is such that it is explicitly mentioned in a chapter in the NSS titled *‘Western Hemisphere: The Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine’*. The chapter promises to reject any non-American influence in the region, and explicitly calls for more US military and economic focus on the Americas. The NSS pledges to ‘deny non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to position forces or other threatening capabilities, or to own or control strategically vital assets, in our Hemisphere’. The aggressive policy could implicitly authorise a set of measures dedicated to achieving this objective, including trade sanctions to military interventions – as seen in Venezuela – in the region to limit China, Russia, and Iran’s activity in the Hemisphere while asserting North America’s primacy. In addition, the NSS presents policies to reduce illegal migration, combat drug trafficking and secure supply chains within the hemisphere.

### 2.1. Latin America

Trump’s decisiveness to exert control over the hemisphere was soon operationalised when US military forces struck Venezuela on 3 January 2026 through Operation *Absolute Resolve*, capturing President Nicolás Maduro and his wife. Trump stated “we are going to run the country [Venezuela] until we can do a safe, proper...transition”, denoting the willingness to use force, and political coercion if needed. Operation Absolute Resolve was the first direct regime-toppling intervention in Latin America since the 1980s. Outside Venezuela, the Trump administration views many governments as targets for pressure or intervention. On 4 January 2026, he accused Colombia’s President, Gustavo Petro of drug trafficking, saying a US operation in Colombia ‘sounds good to me’. He similarly commented that Cuba’s long-time dependence on Venezuelan oil, stating ‘Cuba looks like it is ready to fall’.

### 2.2. Greenland

Trump’s renewed obsession with Greenland, a self-ruled Danish territory, is not new. In the past, Trump floated the idea to buy Greenland, and now it threatens to acquire it by force attracted by the region’s minerals, ‘size and strategic location bordering Canada, the Arctic and the Atlantic’. However, Greenland’s top officials have rejected Trump’s buying offer and have positioned themselves with Denmark. In this context, tensions between the US and EU Member States have strained, with some supporting a NATO mission in the region and European

troops arriving in Greenland. What was meant as a hemispheric doctrine is now forcing the US compete with its own allies for influence over distant territories.

### 3. The Donroe Doctrine: Erratic Re-Orientation

Why is the Monroe Doctrine trending again? We argue it has to do more with domestic political reasons than in response to external threats. For example, Roosevelt invoked it because anti-imperialists were hindering his ability to act freely in the region. Nowadays, the Monroe Doctrine has a very close relationship with American conservative nationalism. In the last 15 years, the radical right has been gaining ground in the US, with many of these movements embracing isolationism and, therefore, the Monroe Doctrine. In Trump's first term, the Monroe Doctrine began to resurface, albeit not so strongly: National Security Advisor John Bolton in 2019 referred to the doctrine on several occasions. Currently, a segment of the US population is criticising the globalisation model and its economic effects. The doctrine is not only the result of internal struggles within the country, but has also resurfaced due to the debate about the role America should play in the world. The NSS refers to the Trump corollary, using this doctrine to project his worldview into what the world should look like.

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Trump views the world's division into spheres of influence, with the US controlling the Western Hemisphere, ensuring its security through stable governments – not necessarily democratic ones – and exerting military and economic interventionism. In turn, it is a tool for promoting an isolationist shift, abandoning the post-World War II international order and areas where they have less influence and are not interested. The US's strategy to return to regionalism and spheres of influence is likely a result of its inability to compete with China, needing to find a safe haven – the Western Hemisphere – to cope with global changes. In fact, it is not isolationism, but rather re-orienting – quite erratically – using Latin America as a tool to strengthen itself. Unlike the 1823 original Monroe Doctrine, which identified Latin America as a community of new states that had to be protected from European interference, Trump's corollary presents the region as an arena for global struggle where action is necessary to secure resources and a sphere of influence to contain powers like China, the US's main strategic geopolitical rival.

Altogether, the Donroe Doctrine is Trump's grand attempt to 'make the Americas American' aggressively and militarily, fusing 19th-century hemispheric hegemony with 21st-century brinkmanship.

## NOTES

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