

New US National Security Strategy designates Latin America as being within the US' sphere of influence | **Credendo**

Event

On 5 December, the US unveiled its new National Security Strategy (NSS), marking a shift in global priorities. Latin America now takes centre stage, replacing Asia on which the US' focus lay previously. The strategy underscores President Trump's determination to curb external, primarily Chinese, influence in what can be interpreted as the US' sphere of influence. This approach, supported by a renewed version of the Monroe doctrine with a Trump corollary (also called the "Donroe doctrine"), echoes the 19th-century policy that sought to keep European powers out of the Americas, which paved the way for US pre-eminence in the region until well into the 20th century. The NSS asserts that the western hemisphere must remain under US control: politically, economically, commercially and militarily. It underscores that the era of the US as a benevolent hegemon is over: coercion has replaced negotiation, and military intervention is explicitly back on the table.

Impact

The Donroe doctrine signals a far more muscular US approach in Latin America than in previous decades. Forces have been redeployed to Latin America, bringing 34% of US troops into the region – [the largest military build-up in the Caribbean since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis](#). According to the NSS, these forces aim to crush "narcoterrorists", control migration, and most importantly, deny competitors access to assets and territory in what the US sees as "their hemisphere". This is particularly significant given that Latin America holds about one third of the world's critical minerals. The strategy also explains the recent and unprecedented US move to intercept US-sanctioned oil vessels in the Caribbean Sea as they leave port (the "US oil blockade"), besides the regular bombing of boats of alleged narcoterrorists.

On the economic front, nearshoring and the pursuit of supply chain resilience within the hemisphere have become increasingly important as the US seeks to reduce its dependence on China. This reflects a broader geopolitical strategy in which the US actively uses coercive tools to reshape supply chains within what it considers its sphere of influence, as illustrated by the pressure exerted on Mexico to apply import tariffs on Chinese goods. At the same time, advantages, such as Central America's comparatively lower US tariffs, help the region to attract investments and outperform its Asian competitors, for example in the textile sector, which reinforces the US objective to consolidate hemispheric supply chains.

The reinvented Monroe doctrine implies a wish for deeper US political involvement in Latin America. Recent interference in Honduras' presidential elections and Argentina's legislative polls suggests a trend which is likely to continue as the region enters a busy electoral year. Meanwhile, Latin America's political pendulum is expected to swing to the right anyway, driven by public frustration over crime and weak economic growth, and as a natural backlash against incumbents.

This pivot toward Latin America reflects a broader shift in global power dynamics, a trend that was already visible in the past years. The world is moving from a unipolar US-dominated order, which peaked in the 1990s, to a chaotic multipolar system marked by intense rivalry between the US and

China, the world's biggest superpowers. In this context, more tariff threats (e.g., in Brazil amid Bolsonaro's trial), gunboat diplomacy (e.g., in Venezuela, where this tactic is likely aimed at toppling Maduro), and even unusual bailouts (e.g., Argentina) in 2026 and beyond are to be expected.

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