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National Security Strategy 2025

Quest to Preserve US Hegemony

The National Security Strategy (NSS) 2025 announced by the United States of America (USA) has been observed as marking an “ideological and substantive” shift in its foreign policy. The terroristic attack carried by the US on Venezuela and its intention to ‘dominate’ Western Hemisphere are part of the Trump Corollary of the Monroe Doctrine announced in the NSS. This shows that there is no ‘substantive shift’ in its foreign policy. Rather it is assuming a much more aggressive posture.

Commentators have argued that the US has given up on its agenda of promoting “democracy”; that China, which was “front and centre” in earlier documents, “does not find a mention until one finishes reading two-thirds of the present document”; and, more significantly, that Europe is “treated with derision.” The US is accused of being “transactional” and not “concerned” with global realities. However, a close perusal of the NSS shows no radical departure from the imperialist policies of the ‘transactional’ United States.

In the section on Strategy, the NSS states that the “United States cannot allow any nation to become so dominant that it could threaten our interests. We will work with allies and partners to maintain global and regional balances of power to prevent the emergence of dominant adversaries.” This statement closely resembles one made in a strategic document released by the Pentagon in 1992, immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, titled *The Defence Planning Guidance* (DPG). That document laid out a strategy for the permanent dominance of the USA. It stated: “Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival... that poses a threat on the order of that posed formerly by the Soviet Union. We must endeavour to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power.” A comparison of these two documents, separated by more than three decades, shows that there has been no basic change in the US approach. It seeks to maintain its hegemony at any cost and ensure that the world remains unipolar. The NSS goes a step further by stating that the US would not even allow “regional domination” by other countries.

The US intends to prevent the rise of challengers not only by strengthening its economy and military, but also by intervening to prevent other countries from advancing. The NSS makes this intention explicit: “For a country whose interests are as numerous and diverse as ours, rigid adherence to non-interventionism is not possible.” This statement makes it abundantly clear that the US will continue to intervene in the sovereign affairs of other countries under the guise of protecting its “interests.”

Despite the best efforts of the US, it has failed to prevent the emergence of China as an economic powerhouse. China is the second-largest economy in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the largest in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). The world has taken note of the rapid strides made by China in advanced science and modern technology. The US feels threatened by China's rise and regards it as a rival power. It has attempted to intervene in China's internal affairs, including efforts in the first decade of the 21st century to promote separatist forces, some of which resorted to terrorist attacks. Keen foreign policy observers have also noted the involvement of the CIA and the US in the more recent protests in Hong Kong. However, all such attempts at intervention have failed in China. This, however, does not mean that the US has stopped trying or will stop trying; the NSS only reinforces this assumption.

While the number of explicit references to China has declined compared to earlier documents, the 'ghost' of China is present throughout the NSS. The document leaves little doubt that it is referring to China when it states: "We want to prevent an *adversarial power* from dominating the Middle East, its oil and gas supplies, and the chokepoints." Similarly, China is implicitly identified as the *adversary* when the NSS speaks of not depending or relying "on any adversary, present or potential, for critical products or components." The reference to critical dependence on rare earth minerals is particularly telling.

PRIORITISING WESTERN HEMISPHERE

To reduce its dependence on China for rare earth minerals, the United States is looking to countries in Latin America to meet its needs. This is one of the key reasons for the emphasis on the Western Hemisphere, the most discussed aspect of the NSS. A document released by the US Council on Foreign Relations, titled *China's Growing Influence in Latin America*, notes China's investments in lithium production in the so-called "Lithium Triangle" countries of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. Together, these three countries contain roughly half of the world's known lithium reserves, a critical mineral for electric vehicles and batteries. Between 2000 and 2018, China invested approximately \$73 billion in Latin America's raw materials sector.

The US notes that in 2000, the Chinese market accounted for less than 2 percent of Latin America's exports. Over the next eight years, trade grew at an annual rate of 31 percent. By 2021, total trade exceeded \$450 billion, rising to a record \$518 billion in 2024. The report cites with concern predictions by some economists that this figure could exceed \$700 billion by 2035 (*China's Growing Influence in Latin America*).

China's growing presence in Latin America is viewed as a direct challenge to the United States. Writing in May 2025, Enrique Millán-Mejía of the Atlantic Council stated: "China's growing presence poses a direct challenge to US dominance in the region.... For the United States, failure to recalibrate its approach to regional diplomacy risks further alienation and erosion of soft power in its traditional sphere of influence." The US has long considered the entire South American continent, along with Central American and Caribbean countries – collectively referred to as Latin America – as its "sphere of influence."

The present US administration, led by President Donald Trump, believes that unless it regains control over countries in the Western Hemisphere, it will not be able to counter the growing threats to its dominance. It holds that, in order to confront China, the United States must first cut China off from access to markets and natural resources. The US believes this can be achieved with relative ease in its 'own backyard' – Latin America.

The NSS attributes this situation to past mistakes: "Non-Hemispheric competitors have made major inroads into our Hemisphere, both to disadvantage us economically in the present, and in ways that may harm us strategically in the future. Allowing these incursions without serious pushback is another great American strategic mistake of recent decades." To correct these mistakes, the NSS declares that, "after years of neglect, 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." Here, the phrase "access to key geographies" is particularly significant.

TARGET VENEZUELA

The increased belligerence of the US in the region is evident in its terroristic attack on Venezuela and the kidnap of President Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores. Targeting Venezuela, home to the world's largest known oil reserves, forms the first step in Washington's attempt to "reclaim" its dominance. This marks the first concrete reflection of the policy shift the US seeks to impose in the region. In the build-up before the attack the US mobilised at least eight US naval vessels, including the world's largest warship, in the Caribbean Sea, along with the deployment of more than 20,000 soldiers. In addition to naval power, a fleet of F-35 fighter jets, B-52 bombers, and other aircraft has been positioned, ready for combat. It had carried out more than 30 attacks on boats leaving or approaching the Venezuelan coast and the first land-based attack on Venezuela was launched on 30 December.

The US claims that Venezuela is responsible for harbouring narcotics gangs involved in smuggling illegal drugs into the United States. It has even accused Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro of leading one such gang. Few, however, harbour any illusion that these claims reflect the truth. Indeed, the facts are entirely to the contrary. Only 10-20 per cent of illegal narcotics entering the US originate from Venezuela, and the principal migration routes allegedly used for illegal entry into the US do not even pass through Venezuelan territory. The duplicity of the US becomes apparent when one recalls that Juan Orlando Hernández, the former president of Honduras and a key figure implicated in drug trafficking, was recently unconditionally pardoned and released by President Trump.

Clearly, the real reasons for targeting Venezuela have little to do with narcotics trafficking or illegal migration. Destabilising Venezuela would pave the way for the US to undermine Cuba, long regarded as its most coveted prize in the region. Venezuela has also developed close relations with China, Russia, and Iran, all of which the US considers challengers to its hegemony. Although the US has imposed severe sanctions to oust the democratically elected Maduro government, Venezuela has managed to withstand their

impact with assistance from China, Russia, and Iran. China, in particular, has invested heavily in Venezuela's oil industry and infrastructure projects. Recently, it extended loans worth nearly \$60 billion, which Venezuela repaid through crude oil supplies. The US is deeply concerned about these strengthening ties between China and Venezuela.

The NSS openly acknowledges this challenge, stating: "Some foreign influence will be hard to reverse, given the political alignments between certain Latin American governments and certain foreign actors." The United States now seeks to reshape the political "alignments" of countries in the region to reduce their dependence on China, Russia, and Iran. In this context, ousting Maduro becomes a central objective, as he is regarded as one of the staunchest opponents of US intervention in Latin America.

The US is emboldened by recent political developments in the region, which indicate a steady shift to the right. In several countries formerly governed by Left and progressive parties or movements, right-wing forces have made a comeback. The victories of José Antonio Kast in Chile, Nasry Asfura in Honduras, and Rodrigo Paz in Bolivia, following right-wing electoral successes in Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, and El Salvador, underscore this broader trend.

The US is openly intervening in the electoral processes in many countries. Donald Trump explicitly linked a massive \$40 billion financial package to Milei's electoral success. This package included a central bank currency swap of \$20 billion and \$20 billion in private loans. Trump further stated that the US would not "waste our time" with helping Argentina if Milei's party does not win future elections. It is a clear political bailout for Milei.

Days before the election in Honduras, Trump warned: "If (Nasry 'Tito' Asfura) doesn't win, the United States will not be throwing good money after bad, because a wrong Leader can only bring catastrophic results to a country, no matter which country it is". He also pardoned a key member of Asfura's party, former President Juan Orlando Hernández, who had been serving a 45-year prison sentence in the US for drug trafficking offenses. In a closely contested election, Asfura was declared the winner. The result is now challenged by the defeated candidates as they allege manipulation and fraud.

In Brazil, Trump questioned the legitimacy of criminal coup charges against former President Jair Bolsonaro and imposed 50 per cent tariffs as the government refused to heed to his warning.

From all the above instances it is clear that the US is openly using its financial and military power to push various countries in Latin America to the right.

Against this backdrop of a rightward political shift, Venezuela has proven to be a tough nut for the United States to crack. Since the presidency of Hugo Chávez, it has been one of the few countries to successfully resist repeated US attempts at regime change. Efforts to engineer coups were thwarted by popular movements within Venezuela, and these failures have been compounded by the ineffectiveness of sanctions. As a result, the US now flexed its military muscle. President Trump has authorised the CIA to undertake subversive activities aimed at removing President Maduro from power. Ordinarily, such authorisations are neither publicly announced nor revealed until decades later, when official archives are opened. Trump's decision to make this authorisation public signals a brazen approach and a determination to achieve his objective at any cost. It is now evident that the CIA operations

played an important role in the bombings in Caracas and also in the abduction of Maduro, by providing the US military personnel with precise details.

This approach reflects the core thrust of the NSS, which states that “we should make every effort to push out foreign companies that build infrastructure in the region,” and that “we want other nations to see us as their partner of first choice, and we will, through various means, discourage their collaboration with others.” The phrases ‘every effort’ and ‘various means’ implicitly encompass measures such as enforcing regime change and violating national sovereignty. In effect, this represents a ‘Trump corollary’ (or extension) of the Monroe Doctrine that the NSS seeks to implement across Latin America.

MONROE DOCTRINE AND TRUMP COROLLARY

The Monroe Doctrine, now 202 years old (proclaimed on 2 December 1823), declared that the United States would consider any attempt by powers outside the Western Hemisphere to extend their political systems to “any portion of this hemisphere” as dangerous to its peace and safety. Building upon this, Theodore Roosevelt asserted the right of the United States to exercise an “international police power” to curb what he termed “chronic wrongdoing.” This extension came to be known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Roosevelt famously characterised his foreign policy approach as “speak softly, and carry a big stick.” This is essentially the posture that Trump seeks to adopt in Latin America today.

In effect, Trump is implementing a bipartisan imperial consensus that has long existed in the United States. President John F. Kennedy, in a press conference on 29 August 1962, stated: “The Monroe Doctrine means what it has meant since President Monroe and John Quincy Adams enunciated it, and that is that we would oppose a foreign power extending its power to the Western Hemisphere, and that is why we oppose what is happening in Cuba today. That is why we have cut off our trade. That is why we worked in the OAS and in other ways to isolate the Communist menace in Cuba. That is why we will continue to give a good deal of our effort and attention to it.” Kennedy was reiterating the famous “ripe fruit” analogy articulated earlier by John Quincy Adams regarding Cuba: “If an apple severed by its native tree cannot choose but fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only towards the North American Union.”

Trump has never shied away from expressing his attachment to the Monroe Doctrine. He reaffirmed his commitment to its implementation at the 73rd United Nations General Assembly in 2018. During his first term, his Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, praised the Monroe Doctrine as having “clearly... been a success” and warned against what he described as “imperial” Chinese trade ambitions, presenting the United States as the region’s preferred trade partner (February 2018). Thus, references to the Monroe Doctrine are not new for Trump or his administration. What is new, however, is the explicit declaration in the NSS 2025 of an extension of the doctrine, a ‘Trump Corollary’, aimed at restoring “American power and priorities.”

What was carried out in Venezuela is precisely what is articulated in the NSS. The document states that the “United States must reconsider our military presence in the Western Hemisphere”; calls for “a readjustment of our global military presence to address urgent threats in our Hemisphere”; advocates “a more suitable Coast Guard and Navy presence to control sea lanes, to thwart illegal and other unwanted migration, to reduce human and drug trafficking, and to control key transit routes in a crisis”; and endorses “targeted deployments to secure the border and defeat cartels, including, where necessary, the use of lethal force to replace failed law enforcement.” All of this is intended to make it “harder for non-hemispheric competitors to increase their influence in the region.”

The NSS also links aid to countries to their willingness to ‘wind down’ adversarial influence in the Western Hemisphere. The United States seeks to coerce countries into reducing dependence on “outside” technologies, particularly in strategic sectors such as telecommunications. The aggressive anti-Huawei campaign launched by the US forms part of this broader strategy. US ambassadors in the region have reportedly been instructed to promote private-sector investments in the countries where they are posted and to ensure that capital from outside the hemisphere is not preferred. The promotion of the purchase and consumption of US-made goods is central to this approach. A classic “carrot and stick” policy is advocated, ‘applying pressure’ while ‘offering incentives’, to “protect our hemisphere.” In language reminiscent of George W. Bush’s post-9/11 rhetoric, countries are compelled to choose “either with us” or “against us.” As the NSS starkly declares: “The choice all countries should face is whether they want to live in an American-led world of sovereign countries and free economies or in a parallel one in which they are influenced by countries on the other side of the world.”

CHINA’S POLICY ON LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

Around the same time that the United States released its NSS, China also issued its *Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean*. The contrast between the two documents is striking. China’s paper advocates an “equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization,” and promotes the building of “a community with a shared future for humanity.” The only condition China places on cooperation is adherence to the One-China principle. A vast majority of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have already accepted this principle and recognise the People’s Republic of China.

The Policy Paper states that “China is ready to work with LAC countries to uphold the principles of respect, equality, diversity, mutual benefit, cooperation, openness, inclusiveness and unconditionality, and actively promote cooperation in various fields within the framework of the China-CELAC Forum.” Notably, China does not demand that countries choose between competing powers. It explicitly declares: “The China-LAC relationship does not target or exclude any third party, nor is it subordinated to any third party.” Most importantly, China does not advocate war or aggression in the region. Instead, it affirms that “China supports the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace and the Declaration of Member States of the Agency for the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. It advocates the peaceful settlement of international disputes and hotspot issues and opposes the wilful threat or use of force.”

This sharp contrast between the positions of the world’s two most powerful countries has not gone unnoticed. For this reason, even many countries governed by right-wing parties have not hesitated to maintain relations with China. Despite repeated US efforts to wean them away from Beijing, they have remained unwilling to forgo these ties. The show of force against Venezuela is also intended to intimidate such countries and demonstrate that the US “means business.”

The NSS also addresses China directly. Strengthening the US position in Latin America (the Western Hemisphere) is closely linked to its confrontation with China in the Indo-Pacific (for us Asia-Pacific). The NSS states: “The Indo-Pacific is already, and *will continue to be*, among the next century’s key economic and geopolitical battlegrounds. To thrive at home, we must successfully compete there – and we are.”

In this region, the US intends to rely heavily on its allies to confront these challenges. As the NSS notes, “The United States must work with our treaty allies and partners... and use our combined economic power to help safeguard our prime position in the world economy.” The US seeks to “restore” the military balance in its favour.

To this end, the US wants its allies in the region – Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Australia – to substantially increase their defence spending. These countries are expected to enter into expanded defence arrangements with the US and continue large-scale purchases of American arms and ammunition, benefiting the US military-industrial complex. This pressure is not limited to the Asia-Pacific. NATO members are also being compelled to increase defence spending to at least 5 per cent of their GDP, up from the earlier benchmark of 2 per cent. The US seeks to revive its economy by fuelling tensions and threatening peace. As the NSS bluntly states: “Preventing conflict requires a vigilant posture in the Indo-Pacific, a renewed defence industrial base, greater military investment from ourselves and from allies and partners, and winning the economic and technological competition over the long term.”

The US wants all countries to join it in isolating China and to contribute to strengthening the US economy so that it can regain global hegemony. While countries of the Global South are demanding the democratisation of international institutions such as the United Nations and financial bodies like the World Bank and the IMF, the US continues to oppose these demands. This stance is reflected in the NSS, which insists that international financial institutions should “implement reforms” that “serve American interests.”

India is mentioned in the NSS as a country expected to play a role, defined by the US, in achieving its Indo-Pacific objectives. Many pro-US commentators in India were disappointed that the country was not accorded greater prominence in Washington’s strategic calculus. Despite the efforts of the Prime Minister and the BJP-led government, the US remains dissatisfied and is pressing India to open key sectors such as agriculture and pharmaceuticals to American investment.

The NSS claims to uphold the principle of “America First.” In reality, it seeks to impose US hegemony and overlordship on the entire world. Dissenting voices and alternative models are not tolerated. While it pays lip service to peace, it actively promotes global tensions. The

primary objective of the NSS is to establish imperialist hegemony and the primary beneficiary is the US military-industrial complex. Above all, the rise of China and its emergence as a rallying point for forces opposed to imperialism, deeply unsettles the US. The NSS represents yet another attempt to address the challenge to preserve US hegemony. However, it is bound to fail. The reasons lie in the contradictions of the capitalist system itself. The NSS reflects yet another effort by the ruling classes to escape a systemic crisis, but, once again, in vain.