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# Reviving the Monroe Doctrine – Trump's Campaign for Panama, Canada and Greenland

**Abstract:** The research subject in this paper is the foreign policy of the newly-appointed US president Donald Trump in relation to the parts of the Western Hemisphere – primarily Panama, Canada and Greenland, openly claiming them for the United States of America. The starting hypothesis is that Donald Trump wants to revive the Monroe Doctrine formulated as early as 1823 and stipulating that the United States should be the indisputable master of the Western Hemisphere. The research results show that, despite Donald Trump's pompous announcements that he would expand the territory of his country during the first six months of his mandate, no significant steps were taken in that direction. In the research, the historical method, the analysis method and the case study method were applied.

**Keywords:** Donald Trump, United States of America, Monroe Doctrine, Western Hemisphere

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## Introductory considerations

After the magnificent and convincing victory in the presidential election held on 5 November 2024, with 49.80% votes (a total of 77,302,590 votes, 312 out of 270 necessary electoral votes) and the defeat of his rival from the ranks of the Democratic Party, Kamala Harris, who won 48.32% votes (a total of 75,017,613 votes, and 226 electoral votes), Republican Donald Trump became president of the United

States of America for the second time. Few people were not surprised and taken aback by the fact that Trump had defeated Harris in all the so-called swing states – Nevada, Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin (CNN, 2024). During the pre-electoral campaign, Trump clearly announced to his voters and Americans in general that, if he was elected president of the state, he planned to continue where he had left off four years earlier. As his internal political and social

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priorities, Trump established the opening of new vacancies for US workers (especially the poor and the middle class), reduction of inflation and taxes, protection of Christian family and public values (fight against the LGBT ideology, *woke* culture etc.) and deportation of illegal migrants, particularly those with criminal records. The foreign policy aspects of Trump's pre-electoral promises concerned, first of all, stopping the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East, and then economic reining of China, introduction of customs duties on the imports of goods from a large number of the countries worldwide and financial "disciplining" of other NATO member-states (N1, 2024).

After officially taking the oath on 20 January 2025 as the 47<sup>th</sup> US president, Trump presented his "Project 2025" to the US public – a 900-page list of public policies he was planning to implement in the following four years. The most important proposals in "Project 2025" are the following: placing the entire federal bureaucracy, including independent agencies, under direct control of the president (so-called unitary executive theory, abolition or substantial reduction of the scope of operations of certain state agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), restriction of the sale of abortion pills (Trump had previously given up the idea to demand the abortion prohibition at the national level), deportation of millions of "undocumented" migrants and continued construction of the wall on the southern border with Mexico, leaving international treaties regarding climate protection and exploitation of the US energy sources (the famous slogan *drill, baby, drill*) and recognition of male and female genders as the only natural genders (Wendling, 2025).

## The concept and meaning of the Monroe Doctrine

To understand Trump's foreign policy orientation, which will be elaborated further in the paper, and whose core implies full political, economic and security domination of the United States of America, first it is necessary to look at the concept and meaning of the Monroe Doctrine, which laid the foundations of such thinking and practice as many as two centuries ago. The Monroe Doctrine is a brief US foreign policy strategy devised by US President James Monroe in 1823. According to it, most succinctly, it was supposed to prohibit further colonization of the countries on the American continent by Europeans under the slogan "America to Americans", on one side, as well as to put the given territory under the direct military, political and economic control of the USA, on the other side (Petrović, 2023, p. 10). It is impossible to understand the Monroe Doctrine without understanding the historical context in which it emerged. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States was a young state which still feared British colonialism, as well as other European colonialisms and, for the sake of their suppression and prevention, it was guided by two kinds of logic – the first, to take as much space as possible for itself on the North American continent (through purchase, military conquests, displacement of autochthonous populations), and the second, to spread its influence as much as possible onto the geopolitical territory today referred to as Latin America. At that time, Latin American countries had just began liberating themselves from Spanish and Portuguese colonialism and were much more backward than the USA

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in all aspects. In fact, most of them copied the US political system, with the president as a dominant political figure, a bicameral parliament, and even a two-party system. What significantly differed the countries in this region from the USA were clientelism, amoral familism and caudillism (the cult of adoring the strong paternalist leader) as gener-

ationally rooted negative forms of socio-political relations (Krstić, 2014).

There is no doubt that from 1823 to 1898, the United States managed to establish absolute hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. The year of 1898 was marked by the American-Spanish war, which resulted not only in Spain's defeat, but also



James Monroe, by Gilbert Stuart, 1820-1822, American painting, oil on canvas

Photo: Shutterstock

in the complete collapse of the Spanish Empire, which practically ceased to exist. Apart from the Philippines and Guam, the United States also took over Cuba from Spain, and thus began spreading its influence in the Caribbean region. What should not be forgotten is that the US domination over its Latin American neighbours was also confirmed during the American-Mexican war (1846–1848), when the US not only kept Texas, but also conquered a third of the young Mexican state, where the US troops even marched into the capital, Ciudad de Mexico. As for Canada, which actually gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1931 and with which the US shares the longest land border between two countries worldwide, the United States did not experience larger political, let alone military conflicts. To tell the truth, the United States waged war with the British troops in today's Canadian territory long ago, in 1812, but that conflict had no American-Canadian features in today's meaning of these concepts, but represented Britain's attempt to recover former American colonies and put them under its control. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States conducted a series of both direct and indirect supported military actions across Latin America with the aim of overthrowing unsuitable regimes both ideologically and in other ways. Their number is estimated to have been even more than 50. Thus, the US army invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965, Grenada in 1983, Panama in 1989, and Haiti in 2004. It wholeheartedly supported the right-wing anti-communist regimes (particularly after the fear of the spread of communism after the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959) in the broad and dec-

ades-long operation known under the code name "Operation Condor)" – from Augusto Pinochet in Chile, via Jorge Rafael Videla in Argentina, Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay, (Hugo Banzer in Bolivia and Francisco Morales Bermúdez in Peru, to the support to Manuel Noriega in Panama and the so-called Los Contrás in Nicaragua. The outcome of all this was that the United States entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an absolute hegemon in the Western Hemisphere, and definitely as the only global superpower in the period after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of the Soviet Union. The latter had a particularly negative effect on communist Cuba and Sandinistas in Nicaragua as the last point of resistance to the US geopolitical and geoeconomic ambitions in that part of the world.

### Trump like Reagan – anticipated invasion on the Panama Canal?

It is important to understand the history of the US-Panama relations in order to understand Trump's unhidden ambitions concerning the return of the Panama Canal under the US control. Panama gained its independence from Colombia in 1903 thanks to the direct political and indirect military aid of the United States. In the meantime, the United States negotiated with Colombia and managed to get permission for digging the Panama Canal on the narrowest isthmus separating the Caribbean Sea from the Pacific (after the failed French attempt to do it at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). In 1914, the Americans finally completed the canal 82 kilometres long and between 90 and 350

metres wide, putting it under their control. The most important political figures in Panama in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were two dictators – Omar Torrijos and Manuel Noriega, whereas both of them stayed in power thanks to the US support, and both of them were overthrown at the moment when they no longer worked on behalf of the US interests. The only thing remaining useful for Panama’s long-term interests after Torrijos was the agreement he signed with US President Jimmy Carter, stipulating that the Panama Canal was to be returned under Panama’s sovereignty in 1999, which actually occurred later. It has already been emphasized that the United States invaded Panama in 1989, when it successfully overthrew Manuel Noriega’s narcokleptocratic regime, the consequence of which was Panama’s democratization, but also the end of the Panama’s army. Today, the United States is the largest Panama’s import and export partner and the two countries have had the free trade agreement since 2012 (Petrović, 2023).

Only two months after his victory in the presidential election and before his inauguration, Trump threatened, in his own way, that his country would put the Panama Canal under its control, just as had been the case before 1999. In fact, Trump accused Panama of charging excessively high prices for the transport of goods through the Panama Canal, emphasizing that such a situation is not only extremely unfavourable for the United States (because China’s trade and infrastructural presence in that area was becoming dizzyingly strong), but also unfair, because his country had built that canal. The newly-appointed US president

has rather explicitly stated that he would not let the Panama Canal “fall into wrong hands”, referring to CK Hutchison Holdings, with the seat in China, operate two strategically important ports, one of which is situated at the entrance to the canal from the Pacific, while the other one is at the entrance from the direction of the Caribbean Sea. In one of his addresses to the American nation via the social network Truth Social, Trump said that the United States was stolen from in the Panama Canal, as well as in other parts of the world, emphasizing that the fees charged by Panama were ridiculous and rather unfair. In addition, Trump said that if Panama’s authorities failed to be fair to the United States regarding the utilization of the Panama Canal, the United States would recover the Panama Canal quickly and fully. On the other hand, the president of Panama, José Raúl Mulino, in his address to the Panama’s public, said that China did not operate the Panama Canal, that Panama’s independence cannot be the subject of negotiations, and he clearly pointed out that every square metre both of the Panama Canal and of its surroundings, belonged to Panama and that would not change (Voice of America, 2024).

However, Panama’s blunt answer did not discourage Trump in his intention to continue the pressure on this country because of the Panama Canal. In fact, in his inauguration speech Trump promised his fellow Americans to return the Panama Canal under US control, citing the “Manifest Destiny” – a concept of the US expansionism according to God’s providence which, under the strong influence of the puritan religious thought, was formulated back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He ac-



cused Panama of shifting its operations in relation to the control of the Panama Canal to China and thus breaking the promise made in the agreement that came into force in 1999. “We didn’t give it to China. We gave it to Panama and we will get it back”, Trump said (Milikšić, 2025). At the end of April 2025, Trump emphasized that US ships, both military and commercial, should be allowed to go through the Panama and Suez Canals free of charge, explaining that these canals would not even exist without the United States. On that occasion, Trump added that he had asked US State Secretary Marco Rubio, son of Cuban anti-communist immigrants, “to take care of this situation immediately” (Politika, 2025a).

### Trump’s proposal about joining Canada to the United States of America

Historically looking, the relations between the United States and Canada as to neighbouring and young countries in the Western Hemisphere were extremely good until recently. Both countries are the NATO members and their defence policies are additionally interwoven through joint air command of the United States and Canada – the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). They share the border 5,525 miles long which is not guarded by military forces, while the geographic, traffic and economic connectedness of the border parts of these two countries is also important – namely, Seattle and Vancouver and their surrounding areas form a single macro-re-

gion, where the border is often crossed only with a driver’s license or student ID card. From 1993 to 2018, the United States and Canada, together with Mexico, functioned within the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), subsequently replaced by the new agreement in 2018. The American-Canadian economic interaction is significant and, for example, during 2023, the cross-border exchange of goods and services exceeded the value of 2.5 billion dollars on a daily basis. The overall relations of the United States and Canada were raised to an even higher level during the mandates of two left liberal presidents – Joseph Biden and Justin Trudeau in the period between 2020 and 2025 (Gatz et al., 2025).

However, the beginning of Trump’s second presidential mandate brought drastic worsening of the US-Canada relations. In fact, as early as December 2024, before his official inauguration, or only a month after his electoral victory, Trump spoke to Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau and not only threatened to introduce high customs duties to the northern neighbour, but also proposed that Canada should become the 51<sup>st</sup> US federal state, which shocked both the American and Canadian, as well as the world public in general. Trump clearly underlined that he found Canada, just as Mexico, guilty of being allegedly unable to stop the entry of illegal migrants and narcotics from its territory to the US territory. The US president also told the Canadian prime minister that the trade deficit with Canada exceeded 100 billion dollars, warning that he would impose customs duties of 25% on all Canadian goods. Trudeau pointed out that such a move

might destroy Canadian economy, while Trump, in an extremely mysterious way, commented that Trudeau might find it nicer to have the title of the governor of the 51<sup>st</sup> US federal state than the current title of the Prime Minister (Stefanović, 2024). The following month, Trump invited Americans not to buy Canadian products, repeating that he would like to see Canada as the 51<sup>st</sup> US federal state. Although, on the other hand, Trudeau said that it would not happen, Trump did not stop his rhetoric, but further strengthened it by publishing the map of the United States with Canada as its part on his profile on the Truth Social network. After Trudeau’s resignation from the position of the Canadian prime minister, Trump said that the US-Canadian border was artificial and that many Canadians would rather be part of the United States (RTS, 2025a). In February 2025, Trump once again repeated that the solution to the tension in the Canadian-American economic relations (after Trump fulfilled his promise in January 2025 by introducing customs duties of 25% on all Canadian goods) might be Canada’s annexation to the United States. Canada responded reciprocally by introducing tariffs on the US goods in the amount of 25%, while Trump subsequently recalled part of the imposed tariffs. However, the US President sent the following message via the Truth Social network: “We are paying billions of dollars for subsidies to Canada. Why? There is no reason for that. We don’t need anything they have. We have an unlimited amount of energy sources, we should produce cars on our own and we have more timber than we can spend. Without our subsidies, Canada would exist as a sustainable

country. Harsh but true!” (Politika, 2025b).

In the meantime, the British research agency “YouGov” conducted a survey among the Canadians about the potential joining of their country to the United States, where 77% respondents said that they opposed it on a larger or smaller scale. On the other hand, only 36% Americans (mostly Trump’s voters) were in favour of annexing Canada, while 42% of them (mostly voters of Democrats and Kamala Harris) were against it. As many as 74% Canadians think that the potential annexation would be a difficult process, and this opinion is shared by 68% Americans. In contrast, only 13% Americans and 15% Canadians think that joining the two countries would proceed easily (Politika, 2025b). It did not discourage Trump who, at the end of April 2025, before the parliamentary election in Canada, wished this country good luck in the election, repeating his attitude that it should be joined to the United States. “Choose the man with strength and wisdom to halve your taxes, to increase your military power to the highest level in the world, free of charge, to quadruplicate your operations with cars, steel, aluminium, timber, energy and all other industries with no customs duties or taxes – all this if Canada becomes the 51<sup>st</sup> US state”, Trump wrote on that occasion on the Truth Social network (Politika, 2025c). However, the election was won by the Liberal Party of Mark Carney, Canada’s new prime minister, who said that Trump would not succeed in breaking Canada and achieving his goal of possessing it, speaking emotionally about the United States wanting the Canadian land, resources and water (RTS, 2025b).

## Greenland – from the buyout proposal to open threats to Denmark

Greenland is an autonomous territory which, together with Denmark and the Faroe Islands, makes part of the sovereign Kingdom of Denmark. It is the biggest island in the world, with the surface area of 2,166,086 km<sup>2</sup>, situated on the North American continent and constituting part of the Arctic Circle. Its population is mainly Inuit (wrongly and deroga-

torily called Eskimos), whose status has never been equal to that of Danes as the ruling and economic elite in that region. Apart from being rich in fish and tourist potentials due to rarely seen and intact nature, it is supposed that under its ice surfaces Greenland abounds in gold, coal, copper and zinc. The island fell under the rule of the Vikings as early as the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when Eric the Red and his expedition landed on its shores, while it has been under the control of the Danish crown since 1721. During the past 300 years, Denmark, in line





with its authorities, exploited Greenland economically, spread Protestantism and its own cultural pattern among the oppressed Inuit population and, thanks to Greenland, even today the Kingdom of Denmark has the status of the largest country in Europe (excluding Russia as a Eurasian country), as well as the status of the Arctic power (Vićentić, 2021, p. 160). The Inuit way of life in harmony with the nature and from the nature has been disturbed for generations under the tutorship of official Copenhagen, which substantially led to the fact that today's Greenland is the area with the highest suicide rate in the world. Accordingly, many Inuit people strive to make Greenland an independent state, seeing it as the only way of protecting both their own identity and natural resources (Petrović, Babić, 2024, p 185).

Owing to its exceptional geostrategic importance in the context of “the race for the Arctic” between great powers which is inevitable because of global warming and the melting of thick ice covers, Greenland has become almost an obsession for Donald Trump. Although 80% of the territory of Greenland is covered by ice and has only 56,000 inhabitants (mostly living in and around the capital Nuuk on the southwest shore of the island), the United States have its Pittufik Space Base on Greenland (formerly Thule Air Base), which is an important segment of the US defence strategy on the Northern Hemisphere and the projection of power towards the Arctic in the future. During his first presidential mandate, in 2019, Trump first offered the Danish authorities to buy Greenland, but a clear answer came from the Danish government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs – that the island was not for sale, which put an end to this story at

the time (BBC, 2019). However, Trump's return to power brought a different and more decisive rhetoric about the future of Greenland. Namely, he once again offered Denmark the opportunity to sell Greenland to the United States, but at the same time he clearly stated that the military option of taking over Greenland was also considered in case the purchase was not realized. The US president repeated many times in the first half of 2025 that Greenland might be part of the United States in the future despite the fact that the Danish government did not want to give up this island and the Greenland's Inuit population did not want to join the United States. Nevertheless, Trump proved the seriousness of his intention by sending Vice President, James David Vance, as well as his son Donald Trump Jr to Greenland. During his visit to the above-mentioned Pittufik Space Base, Vance said that “the United States must take control over Greenland in order to stop the threat of China and Russia” (Politika, 2025d). He repeated Trump's position that Greenland should be part of the United States for the sake of world peace and that official Copenhagen had not invested enough in the people of Greenland or in the future of this island (Politika, 2025d).

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that newly-appointed US President Donald Trump wants to make the United States a great country once again, which was also contained in his famous pre-electoral slogan, primarily in military and geopolitical terms. Trump's promises to his voters and all citizens of the United

States were numerous and often grandiose. One of them, although indirect, was that their country would remain the unrivalled military, political, economic and geostrategic master of the Western Hemisphere, just as it has been in the past hundred-odd years. In that respect, wanting to keep the United States competitive to China and Russia, two growing global powers, Trump resorted to the revival of the Monroe Doctrine, established as early as 1823. According to it, Americans have to important tasks – to prevent the entry of other powers into the Western Hemisphere and to make the United States the absolute master of this area. Trump's decision to have the Gulf of Mexico officially renamed into the Gulf of America Bay clearly speaks about how meticulously this enterprise is addressed. Unlike Russia, whose presence in the Latin American territory is not significant, China really constitutes a great American rival in the observed part of the world, where it is sufficient to mention that today China is the most important trade partner to all countries south of Colombia and Ecuador. It is in this context that Trump's intends to overburden China by high tariffs, on the one hand, and to take over the Panama Canal, Greenland and even Canada, on the other hand.

After the first hundred days of Trump's administration we can certainly say that Trump, apart from his intensified rhetoric, has done nothing specific to strengthen the positions of the USA in the Western Hemisphere within the context of his unhidden intentions concerning Greenland, Canada and the Panama Canal. Specifically speaking, Trump did not join any of the observed territories to the United States nor did he put them under the

US direct control. Canada decisively declined the wave of Trump's initial threats that it might become part of the United States, official Washington still does not apply import tariffs to the goods from Canada, while the new Canadian government is even more determined than the previous one in its intention to keep the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its country. What should be taken into account here is the factor of the Francophone Canadians in Quebec (more than 20% of total Canadian population) who have for decades fiercely resisted Anglo-Canadian domination and assimilation and would not accept to be part of yet another, even larger Anglophone unit. The smallest chances for implementing Trump's new Monroe Doctrine refer exactly to the case of Canada. Trump has somewhat bigger chances when it comes to the future of the Panama Canal. Although this country's authorities vigorously refuse the proposal of renouncing control over the canal, not so long ago Panama has already fallen victim of the US military invasion. An extenuating circumstance for Panama might be the fact that today's China depends too much on the Panama Canal in terms of trade that it would so easily leave it under full US control. Finally, it seems that Trump has the best chances for realizing his intentions in Greenland. The situation there is that most Greenlanders on the one hand and most Danes on the other hand are against the sale of this island to the United States, but the question arises as to how ready and able they would be to put up defence against potential US invasion. In security terms, Denmark as part of the NATO directly depends on the United States, while the aggravating factor may definitely

be the fact that Greenlanders are not interested in defending Danish interests in their own territory. To conclude, there is no doubt that Trump will further strengthen his rhetoric in the direction

of the three above-mentioned territories, but it remains to be seen whether the self-proclaimed “world peacemaker” will take a step further and use force.

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