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The Donroe Doctrine: The limited sovereignty of states and the erosion of the rules-based world order

Conceptual foundations and geopolitical implications

of the “Donroe Doctrine”. The “Donroe Doctrine” is a neologism that has entered political and political-science usage over the past year, denoting a contemporary interpretation of the “Monroe Doctrine” and associated with the policy of the 47th President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, towards the Western Hemisphere. The neologism is formed by blending the names “Donald” and “Monroe” and denotes the dominance of the United States of America within its broad zone of influence – chiefly the Western Hemisphere and the adjacent Arctic territories, including the island of Greenland – through harsh, including forceful and possibly military, methods, disregarding the interests of its allies for the sake of the country’s “national interests” as D. Trump personally conceives them. The term first appeared at the beginning of D. Trump’s second presidential term, in the work of R. Forrohar (2025). It represents an updated version of the “Monroe Doctrine”, directed against interference by the great powers of Europe and Asia in the affairs of a region the US regards as a zone of its privileged interests – above all against the presence of Russia in Venezuela, Cuba, and Brazil, and against the growing presence of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in Panama and a number of other countries of the region. Whereas the statements and corresponding actions of the new American administration are declarative, authoritarian, peremptory, and at times threatening in character, Chinese policy in the region, at least since the mid-2000s, has been consistently dynamic in its economic and credit-investment character, and quite attractive to the countries of the region (Sydorenko, 2026). The core provisions of the “Donroe Doctrine” are set out in the new National Security Strategy... (2025), adopted in November 2025, which considerably surpasses the “Monroe Doctrine” and is regarded as D. Trump’s “amendment”

to it. The new doctrine proclaims Washington’s freedom of action within its own sphere of influence while, at the same time, in effect granting China and Russia a similar *carte blanche* in the regions they regard as their exclusive zones of influence.

The “Donroe Doctrine” is a manifestation of contemporary American isolationism (“Make America Great Again”), which recurs cyclically, given D. Trump’s categorical statements about winding down the American nuclear umbrella over Europe, the need for European security autonomy, and the increase to 5% of GDP in security and defence spending by every member state of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (National Security Strategy..., 2025). Although the US presence in Europe is, to a certain extent, visibly being scaled back, America’s current economic, political, and military might is considerably greater than it was when the “Monroe Doctrine” was formulated, and its sphere of interests therefore extends far beyond the Western Hemisphere – encompassing Greenland, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf together with the recent military adventure in Iran, and the Asia-Pacific region. For the independent countries of these regions, the US, as the sole hegemon, or one of two, in the world grants only a sovereignty limited by the vital interests of the US itself. This applies above all to the countries of the American continent, a zone of exclusive US interest. Hence, for the second year running, harsh and aggressive statements have come from D. Trump directed at Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Iran. The “Monroe Doctrine” declared the Western Hemisphere a “forbidden” zone for European countries, in which the US established itself as the leading political, economic, and military power. The “Donroe Doctrine” preserves this status but adds considerably more to it: the US sphere of influence is

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expanding, and the new doctrine correspondingly expands Washington's freedom of action. But this encourages authoritarian/totalitarian countries such as Russia and China towards aggressive actions in the spheres they regard as "their own". International law and the rules-based world order are thereby gradually losing their importance, foundational character, fundamentality, and prerogative. It is not the force of law but the law of force that begins to operate, introducing chaos into the system of international relations. The world is becoming dangerous and unpredictable. Such a situation is becoming threatening both for Ukraine and certain other post-Soviet countries and for Taiwan, since US actions in Venezuela and Iran encourage both V. Putin and Comrade Xi to continue their aggression in the regions of their "exclusive interests". Through its conduct, the US is de facto recognising the Kremlin's claims to control over the former Soviet republics, and the PRC's claims to Taiwan. Although with regard to the PRC one must reckon with a certain probability that, in the event of its aggression, the US would not abandon its long-standing island partner. At the same time, Beijing has for a long time shown itself to be a moderate, stable, and powerful international actor that prefers to use diplomatic and economic coercion rather than brute military force (Clifford, 2026). Thus, the "Donroe Doctrine" emerges as a contemporary model of expanded American dominance, one that reinforces the logic of spheres of influence, constrains the sovereignty of weaker states, and contributes to the further erosion of the rules-based world order.

The formation of the "Monroe Doctrine" as the ideological basis of historical US dominance in the Western Hemisphere. Elements of the concept of "limited sovereignty" first appeared in the "Monroe Doctrine", drafted by Secretary of State and future sixth President of the US (son of the second President, and a former US Minister in St Petersburg) J. Quincy Adams, and proclaimed on 2 December 1823 in President J. Monroe's annual message to Congress. The doctrine became the ideological foundation of US foreign policy and of the subsequent expansion and dominance of the US in the Western Hemisphere. The two-hundredth anniversary of the proclamation of the "Monroe Doctrine" was marked in 2023; yet from the very beginning of 2026, this doctrine, having undergone conceptual evolution and a global geographical journey around the world, has once again returned to the Western Hemisphere of planet Earth, finding new embodiment in the foreign policy of the D. Trump administration. In its time, the "Monroe Doctrine" was intended to legitimise numerous instances of direct and indirect interference by official Washington in the internal affairs of the countries of Latin/South America, under the pretext of helping to resolve their internal conflicts or their conflicts with the US, amid accusations that local dictatorial regimes were violating international law – in particular with regard to drug trafficking, the organisation and "protection" of regional drug trafficking, and the mafia-style distribution of drugs within the US on an industrial scale. In addition, guided by the "Monroe Doctrine", the US devoted considerable effort to subordinating the South American continent to its own interests, while the declared defence of the region against potential aggression by European monarchies helped entrench American hegemony there and counter possible

interference by, above all, Great Britain, Spain, France, and Russia. Thus, although not yet a sufficiently powerful state by international standards, from as early as the end of the first quarter of the 19th century the US already had enough ambition to issue ultimatums to European monarchies more powerful at the time, and to lay claim to hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.

The conceptual expansionist continuation of the "Monroe Doctrine" was the "Manifest Destiny" doctrine of the 1840s, which proclaimed the "divine" right of the US to expand. The messianism professed by the US justified expansionism and the seizure of half the territory of what was then Mexico – the present-day American states of Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, and Utah. In November 2013, against the backdrop of the Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine, the US officially declared its renunciation of the "Monroe Doctrine" after almost 190 years of its consistent application in foreign policy. This statement was made on the eve of the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war and the invasion of Russian troops into the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in February 2014. During a summit of the Organisation of American States, the US Secretary of State under President B. Obama, J. Kerry, announced the end of the period of application of this doctrine. This important decision by the American administration was facilitated both by the genuine development of international relations in South America and by the unfolding, since as far back as the late 1980s, of regional integration processes and the creation, in 1991, of an economic union of South American states (Lossovskyi, 2024). Thus, the "Monroe Doctrine" laid the ideological foundations of American dominance in the Western Hemisphere and became the basis for the subsequent limitation of the foreign-policy autonomy of the states of the region

Concrete manifestations of the "Donroe Doctrine".

A mere 12 years after this demonstratively peace-loving and democratically oriented step, US foreign policy underwent yet another transformation towards a forceful approach. Acting without proper coordination with its partners in the Western political bloc and NATO, and contrary to the norms and principles of international law in force, the US, in a harsh and confrontational manner, effectively reasserted the provisions of the "Monroe Doctrine" with respect to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela – a state of considerable geopolitical significance and one of the countries of Latin America richest in natural resources. In terms of proven oil reserves, this country ranks first in the world (304 billion barrels, or approximately 18% of global reserves), ahead of Saudi Arabia, Canada, Iran, Iraq, and other oil-rich countries. At the same time, a significant proportion of these reserves consist of heavy and extra-heavy oil, which requires costly and complex extraction and refining technologies compared with the light oil of other regions, thereby limiting its economic viability and extraction, notwithstanding the enormous volumes involved (Paton Walsh, 2026). Such actions by the new American administration were not entirely unexpected. During the first year of D. Trump's second presidential term, which began on 20 January 2025, a number of unconventional, contradictory, and legally contentious initiatives were advanced in US domestic and foreign policy. These

included the introduction, in official federal usage, of the name “Gulf of America” in place of “Gulf of Mexico”, public statements about Canada’s possible accession to the US as its 51st state, and claims to the establishment of American control over Greenland, which were justified by reference to strategic interests and the national security needs of the US (Restoring names that honor..., 2025). A separate strand of the D. Trump administration’s policy was criticism of the free-trade agreement between the US, Mexico, and Canada, accompanied by the introduction of increased customs tariffs on products from Canada, Mexico, and a number of other states (Lawder, 2026). At the same time, confrontational rhetoric intensified with respect to Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico. Representatives of these states were accused of insufficient action against drug trafficking, of facilitating the activities of transnational criminal groups, or of supporting so-called narco-terrorism.

A special place in the foreign-policy rhetoric of the new US administration was occupied by the question of the Panama Canal. D. Trump accused the Panamanian government of setting excessive fees for the passage of vessels through the canal, and of creating conditions conducive to the growing influence of the People’s Republic of China over its operation. Against this backdrop, intentions were voiced to restore US control over the canal, whose strategic significance is determined by its role in world trade, logistics, and the safeguarding of US military-political interests in the Western Hemisphere. The Panama Canal holds particular historical significance for the US, which, at the beginning of the 20th century, played a key role in its construction and controlled the adjacent territory for a long time. Agreements concluded between the US and Panama in the 1970s provided for the gradual transfer of the canal to Panamanian jurisdiction. At the same time, in his inaugural address in January 2025, D. Trump declared his intention to “take back” the Panama Canal, asserting that Panama had effectively allowed control over it to pass to China. The possibility of using force to establish American control over this strategic asset was not ruled out. The strengthening of the Chinese presence in Panama became particularly noticeable after 2017, when this state severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan and established official relations with the PRC. Since then, China has become the second-largest user of the Panama Canal after the US. Around 40 Chinese companies operate on Panamanian territory, and structures linked to Chinese capital are involved in the management of two ports located near the canal. In addition, Chinese companies are involved in the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects, including the construction of a fourth bridge over the Panama Canal at a cost of approximately USD 1.4 billion, a high-speed railway line estimated at USD 4 billion, and a natural-gas power plant costing approximately USD 1 billion. In US political and expert circles, suggestions have been voiced that certain Chinese infrastructure facilities in Panama may carry not only economic but also potential strategic significance. In particular, the location of one of the ports near the Panamanian naval base “Noel Rodríguez” is regarded as a factor that could theoretically create opportunities for surveillance of maritime routes, personnel, and the movements of armed forces in the relevant region (Oppmann, 2025).

The earlier foreign-policy statements and territorial claims of the D. Trump administration acquired practical, forceful continuation on 3 January 2026, when the US conducted a special military operation on Venezuelan territory under the codename “Absolute Resolve”. The operation involved the comprehensive deployment of special-operations forces, military aviation, electronic-warfare assets, and other components of the US armed forces, in particular to neutralise Venezuela’s air-defence system. Its result was the capture of Venezuelan President N. Maduro and his wife C. Flores, their forcible removal to the US, and their transfer to the jurisdiction of American law-enforcement authorities. According to the charges brought by the American side, N. Maduro was accused of participation in a conspiracy to commit narco-terrorism and to import cocaine into the US, as well as of offences related to the use and possession of automatic weapons and explosive devices within the activities of transnational drug-trafficking structures. At the same time, the legality of the use of military force on the territory of a sovereign state and of the forcible removal of its head of state without the consent of national authorities became the subject of intense international-legal debate. Preparation for the operation took several months and involved extensive intelligence surveillance of N. Maduro’s whereabouts and movements. To rehearse the actions of the assault team, a full-scale model of his residence was built, on which American servicemen practised individual stages of the forthcoming operation. The use of force was preceded by attempts to reach a political settlement. According to media reports, the American side had proposed that N. Maduro voluntarily leave office and depart Venezuela, in particular for Turkey. In parallel, possibilities were discussed for expanding American companies’ access to the Venezuelan oil sector and for restoring bilateral cooperation in combating drug trafficking. The absence of an agreement on a peaceful end to N. Maduro’s tenure became one of the factors behind the US administration’s shift to a forceful scenario (Paton Walsh, 2026).

Commenting on the operation in Venezuela, D. Trump also raised the possibility of US forceful intervention in Mexico, citing the significant influence of drug cartels in that country. According to him, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum had repeatedly rejected proposals to involve American military personnel in the fight against organised drug crime. D. Trump also linked the need to increase pressure on the Mexican authorities to the scale of drug trafficking into the US via Mexican territory. Following talks between the leaders of the two states, the level of tension in bilateral relations eased somewhat, although the prospects for further stabilisation remained uncertain (Mexico’s president says..., 2026). Venezuela, Mexico, and Panama were not the only Latin American states towards which D. Trump directed threats during the first year of his second presidential term; similar rhetoric was also applied to Colombia and Cuba. On 5 January 2025, the US State Department officially declared the Western Hemisphere an “exceptional zone of interest”, confirming the strategic priority accorded to the region in US foreign policy and marking a *de facto* return to the foundations of the “Monroe Doctrine”. In the political discourse of D. Trump’s supporters, its contemporary interpretation acquired the

name “Donroe Doctrine”. The statement was made against a backdrop of sharp escalation in Latin America following the capture of the Venezuelan dictator Maduro, and was accompanied by harsh signals from Washington directed at a number of countries of the region, in particular Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, and Panama (Clifford, 2026; Paton Walsh, 2026). On 4 January 2026, D. Trump stated that the US wished to see around itself “viable and successful countries” from which oil could be “freely extracted”, since this contributed to lowering world prices and benefited the American economy. American dominance in the Western Hemisphere would “never again be called into question” (Khan, 2026). Such statements by D. Trump and his administration attest to a sharp intensification of US foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. Following the capture of President N. Maduro, Washington is demonstrating a readiness for tough action and direct intervention, making clear that American interests in the region will henceforth be defended without compromise, thereby reviving the “Monroe Doctrine”, from which the American administration officially withdrew in 2013 (Lossovskyi, 2024; National Security Strategy..., 2025).

D. Trump intensified his threats against Colombia, stating that its President, Gustavo Petro, is “next” in the White House’s regional campaign against drug trafficking. “Colombia produces a lot of drugs, so he’d better get smarter, or he will soon be next”. These comments marked a sharp escalation of threats against the Colombian leader. The US President announced the expansion of the military operation against illegal drug trafficking, which had until then been focused on Venezuela, to include Mexico and Colombia (Ewing, 2025). Since as early as September 2025, D. Trump had launched a series of strikes against suspected drug-trafficking vessels in the Caribbean basin and the Pacific Ocean, and had begun a massive build-up of military power off the coast of Venezuela in an attempt to pressure N. Maduro. Tension between D. Trump and G. Petro escalated in the autumn of 2025 amid an aggressive US campaign against drug trafficking in the region. The D. Trump administration stripped Colombia of its status as a partner in drug control and revoked G. Petro’s visa in September 2025, cut aid to the country, and called its leader an “illegal drug trafficker”. D. Trump made clear that he wanted G. Petro to leave office. After the conclusion of the operation in Venezuela, he sharply criticised the Colombian leadership, calling the country’s President a “mentally ill person” and accusing him of involvement in the manufacture and supply of cocaine to the US. US influence in Colombia is reflected in the outcome of the two rounds of the presidential election in that country (31 May and 21 June 2026), which were won by the right-wing candidate Abelardo de la Espriella, who was backed by D. Trump (President of Colombia sharply..., 2026). D. Trump repeatedly expressed the conviction that the communist regime in Cuba “will fall on its own” without the need for US intervention, hinting at the similarity between the situations in Venezuela and Cuba, and promising support to the Cuban people. The US Secretary of State openly advised officials in Havana to start worrying about their future. The change of power in Venezuela may prove to be merely the beginning of a broader restructuring of the political landscape of Latin America. D. Trump has openly stated that

Cuba will be the next item on his administration’s agenda, emphasising that the situations in the two countries have much in common, and that “helping” the Cuban people is a logical step following the events in Caracas, as noted in Trump signals US may expand... (2026).

Such statements may indicate preparation of a new “maximum pressure” strategy against Cuba, which would include both economic sanctions and potential support for opposition movements. Following the success of the operation in Venezuela, the readiness of the D. Trump administration to take decisive action in the Western Hemisphere no longer raises doubt in the eyes of the world community. D. Trump has characterised the domestic situation in Cuba as a crisis, linking it to the inefficiency of the existing political system and the deterioration of the population’s circumstances. He suggested that the Cuban question could subsequently become the subject of a more active Washington policy, similar to that applied to Venezuela. According to him, US actions were intended to support the Cuban people and to respond to violations of human rights and democratic freedoms in the region (King, 2026). This view was developed by Secretary of State M. Rubio, a Cuban by origin known for his uncompromising stance towards the region’s authoritarian regimes. He may be called a “jack of all trades” in the D. Trump administration, since, in addition to holding the third-ranking position in the US table of precedence – Secretary of State – he also serves as Acting National Security Adviser to the President of the US, Acting Archivist of the United States, and Coordinator on Venezuela affairs, and until August 2025 he temporarily headed the US Agency for International Development. It is fully expected that it is M. Rubio who will, at least for a certain period, oversee the policy of the “Donroe Doctrine” – the current US expansion in the Western Hemisphere. The expanded list of M. Rubio’s responsibilities has given rise to numerous memes suggesting that D. Trump offers him every new vacant post that arises. Satirical reports circulated in the media space attributing to M. Rubio a number of unofficial “posts”, including President of Venezuela, Governor of Minnesota, and Secretary-General of Greenland. M. Rubio stressed that Cuba’s leadership should regard US actions against N. Maduro as a serious political signal and a potential warning of possible increased pressure on Havana. The policy of political and economic pressure on Cuba continued: on 24 June 2026, the US Secretary of State announced the imposition of new sanctions against five companies of considerable importance to the country’s economy (King, 2026). In a further indulgence of his imperial fantasies, on 11 May 2026 D. Trump stated that he wished to turn Venezuela into the 51st US state, since it holds oil reserves worth USD 40 trillion and “loves D. Trump”. In response, Venezuela’s acting president D. Rodríguez rejected this proposal. Speaking at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, she stressed the impermissibility of a colonial attitude towards Venezuela and reaffirmed the state’s intention to continue defending its territorial integrity, sovereignty, independence, and national historical heritage. It is notable that, despite D. Trump’s promises of prosperity for Venezuela under US protection, inflation in the country reached 600% in February 2026, compared with 475% in December 2025 (Quell & Garcia Cano, 2026). As for American designs on

Greenland, although the world's largest island does not formally fall within the notional scope of the "Monroe/Donroe Doctrine" or within the Western Hemisphere, it is adjacent to the borders of Canada and the US on the one hand, and to Northern Europe on the other. Ever since his first presidential term, D. Trump has consistently justified US interest in establishing control over Greenland by reference to national-security considerations, in particular the presence near the island of Russian and Chinese military and commercial vessels (Restoring names that honor..., 2025). He has also questioned Denmark's capacity to guarantee the security of the region. At the same time, it is evident that the predominant motivation regarding Greenland is commercial rather than security-related, given that the island is rich in resources, and not only mineral resources. As with everything else in politics, the billionaire property developer approaches Greenland chiefly on the basis of potential commercial gain, while the security justifications fail to make a convincing impression. In the history of US-Danish relations, this is far from the first attempt to "purchase" Greenland. Such proposals were voiced and discussed within the American government as far back as 1867, 1910, 1946, 1955, and 2019. In 1917, pursuant to the Convention between the United States and Denmark... (1917), the US purchased from Denmark islands in the Caribbean Sea, which subsequently became known as the US Virgin Islands and acquired the status of an unincorporated territory of the US.

The "Brezhnev Doctrine of Limited Sovereignty" as a conceptual evolution of the Cold War-era "Monroe Doctrine". The "Monroe Doctrine", after more than 120 years of dominance in the Western Hemisphere, underwent modification following the end of the Second World War, incorporating the option of a US military-political presence in Western Europe, which was followed by the creation, in 1949, of the military-political alliance of the Western world – NATO. In the 1960s-1980s, the "Monroe Doctrine" found its conceptual continuation and practical embodiment during the Cold War era in the form of the undeclared, yet in Western political and expert circles recognised and genuinely operative, "Brezhnev Doctrine" – the foreign-policy doctrine of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) towards the countries of the "socialist camp", the so-called "people's democracies". The "Brezhnev Doctrine" conceptually restored elements of "limited sovereignty" that had been embedded in the foundations of the "Monroe Doctrine". Under this system, full sovereignty was possessed only by the two superpowers of the bloc confrontation – the US and the USSR (Sevriukov, 2018). "Limited sovereignty" was accorded to their respective satellites – the countries belonging to the two rival blocs: on the one hand, the "capitalist countries" of Western Europe and North America and the corresponding countries of Asia and South America; and on the other, the "socialist countries" of Eastern Europe and certain countries of Asia and Latin America. Since these countries were not fully sovereign and independent in their foreign and domestic policy, they acted in accordance with the national interests and directives formulated by the two superpowers – the leaders of the respective blocs. The core provisions of this doctrine were formulated in the article "Sovereignty and the International Obligations of Socialist

Countries", published on 26 September 1968 in the newspaper Pravda, immediately after the crushing of the "Prague Spring". An aggressive application of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" was the invasion by the forces of the Warsaw Pact states and the occupation of Czechoslovakia (21 August – 11 September 1968) under the leadership of the Soviet Army. Similar large-scale forceful operations were carried out by the USSR in Hungary and Poland in 1956 (Lossovskiy, 2015; Russia as a destroyer of peace..., 2023).

The invasion of Soviet forces into Hungary, known as Operation "Whirlwind", was a brutal suppression of the Hungarian Revolution (23 October – 10 November 1956). The deployment of some 60,000 troops and several thousand tanks into Budapest resulted in the deaths of thousands of Hungarians, the deportation and flight of more than 200,000 citizens, and the establishment of a pro-Soviet regime in the country. The revolution sought independence from the USSR and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, but was suppressed by Moscow, which installed a puppet government headed by János Kádár. This brutal manifestation of Moscow's imperialism led to a surge in anti-Soviet sentiment across the world and a sharp decline in the influence of communist and left-wing parties in Western Europe and on the American continent (Khyzhniak, 2009). At almost the same time, a tense situation was also unfolding in Poland; however, an invasion of Soviet forces into that country did not take place in 1956, although, against the backdrop of the events of the "Polish October" and the "Hungarian Revolution", a large-scale deployment of Soviet forces near Poland's borders did occur, creating the threat of intervention and the prevention of Poland's withdrawal from the "socialist camp". Although the USSR threatened the use of force following the Poznań protests of 1956, thanks to Chinese mediation and a compromise reached with the new Polish leadership, Soviet forces returned to their bases, and Poland avoided Hungary's fate, undertaking significant internal political changes that made it possible to secure a degree of autonomy from the USSR (Antypova, 2021). Thus, the "Brezhnev Doctrine" entrenched the practice of limited sovereignty for the states of the socialist bloc, legitimising Soviet political and military control over their domestic and foreign policy course. The "New Doctrine of Limited Sovereignty" – the "Putin Doctrine".

The "New Doctrine of Limited Sovereignty" – the "Putin Doctrine". The principal ideas and elements of this doctrine were formulated in V. Putin's public addresses during 2014. These included his address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (RF) on 18 March, known as the "Crimea Speech"; his speech at the session of the international discussion club "Valdai" on 24 October; and his annual address to the Federal Assembly of the RF on 4 December. These provisions were subsequently given normative form on 26 December 2014 with the adoption of the RF's new Military Doctrine. Compared with the 2010 edition, the list of principal external threats in this document was extended to include the establishment, in states bordering Russia, of regimes whose policies, in the official formulation, threaten the interests of the RF (Lossovskiy, 2015; Sevriukov, 2018). Through this document, the RF "legitimised" future expansions of its territory at the expense of its neighbours. Thus, among

the principal peacetime tasks of the Russian armed forces was proclaimed the “protection of citizens of the RF abroad from armed attack”. It was asserted that even Russian-speaking citizens in distant countries have the right to military protection from the Russian army. In this way, at the official normative and legislative level, legitimisation was entrenched for the continuation of the war of aggression in Ukraine and, in future, in other territories which, in the diseased conception of the Russian dictator, had “grounds” to be proclaimed “historical Russian territories” or as falling within the zone of the “exclusive interests of the RF”.

Factors such as Russian imperial nationalism, transition into great-power chauvinism; the defence of “civilisational” identity (pseudo-Orthodox cultural and religious values, the non-recognition of homosexuality and basic freedoms, and so on); and the promotion of the advantages of “sovereign”, “managed” democracy (as opposed to the values of liberal democracy) serve merely as a cover for the kleptocratic essence of V. Putin’s regime, which, in its third decade of dictatorship, has acquired the features of totalitarianism. The components of the “Putin Doctrine” have not been officially and systematically proclaimed by the Russian leadership. At the same time, analysis of the RF’s foreign-policy practice, above all in the post-Soviet space, makes it possible to identify its principal provisions. Firstly, Russia does not regard the West as a reliable partner. Russian political discourse asserts that the US, NATO, and the European Union (EU) disregard the RF’s regional interests, expand their own influence in the post-Soviet space, and pursue a policy of containing it. Secondly, the RF positions itself outside the Euro-Atlantic community and sets the model of “sovereign” or “managed” democracy against liberal democracy. Thirdly, the Russian authorities justify the existence of a separate Russian civilisational identity and a value system peculiar to it. Furthermore, the formation of a multipolar world order is interpreted by the Russian leadership as a period of weakening established international norms, which expands the possibilities for strong states to pursue their own interests. Under such an approach, international law and international treaties are applied selectively, and the significance of international organisations diminishes in cases where their decisions run counter to the interests of great powers. Accordingly, the state sovereignty of most countries is regarded as relative and dependent on the balance of power within the international system. Genuine full sovereignty is an attribute exclusively of strong states. Others, in one way or another, cede part of their sovereignty either to stronger partners or to international security organisations, as has been noted by D. Humeniuk (2020) and R.V. Tytarchuk (2024). Post-Soviet countries are effectively deprived of the right to genuine sovereignty, since they are accorded only such sovereignty as does not conflict with Russia’s vital interests. Such “conceptual arguments” are used to justify the “legitimacy” of Russia’s aggression, full-scale invasion, and ongoing war in Ukraine (2014–2026), attempts to annex Crimea and other Ukrainian territories, as well as the intervention in Georgia in 2008 and the continuing oligarchic “capture” of that state. A similar situation unfolded in Moldova, analogous to the Georgian case, in the run-up to the presidential

elections held on 20 October 2024 in that country, and following the victory of a pro-Russian candidate in the elections for the head of the autonomous region of Gagauzia held in May 2023. However, the Kremlin’s plans for a “democratic capture” of Moldova collapsed – the pro-European President M. Sandu won.

Possible future victims of the “Putin Doctrine”.

Similar “arguments” could be used to justify Moscow’s future aggressive plans. Among the post-Soviet countries, those not subject to Russia’s “limited” sovereignty are the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), which are members of the European Union and NATO and are covered by the security umbrella of these organisations. At the same time, the new world and European order that V. Putin is attempting to build must, in his conception, extend Russian influence over the entire Baltic region (with the exception of Germany), and not merely its post-Soviet part. The new doctrine of “limited sovereignty” (the “Putin Doctrine”) bears a certain conceptual-historical relationship to the fundamental categories of the 1648 Westphalian system of international relations – such as the priority of the nation-state, national interest, state sovereignty, territorial integrity, the equality of states’ rights, non-interference in internal affairs, the founding of international law, and the binding force of international treaties – while in fact denying and destroying these inviolable, nearly 375-year-old established categories (Frazee, 2019). It may be considered that, against the backdrop of the parallel process of the growth and consolidation of new, distinct global centres of power, the “Putin Doctrine” represents not an attempt at yet another modification of the Westphalian world order, but, on the contrary, its destruction and a return to pre-Westphalian principles – the medieval domination of empires and the primacy of the law of force over the force of law, and the denial of the foundations of international law. Such a system also broadly corresponds to the established principles of Realpolitik (Tytarchuk, 2024). Notwithstanding that the Baltic states are members of the world’s most powerful collective-security system – NATO – the RF continues to exert provocative pressure on them, indicating that the aggressor is testing the strength of the Alliance’s unity and has not abandoned hope of extending the “Putin Doctrine” to the Baltic countries. As has been noted by O. Antypova (2021), analysts and Western politicians consider that the next target of Russian aggression after Ukraine, should the latter be defeated, could be the Baltic states and Poland, as well as Kazakhstan.

Former Deputy Assistant to the President of the US Fiona Hill stated at Congressional hearings in October 2019 that Russia, as early as during D. Trump’s first presidential term, had offered the US control over Venezuela in exchange for the Kremlin’s freedom of action in Ukraine. The transcript of F. Hill’s testimony, preserved in the archive of documents relating to D. Trump’s impeachment case, attests to informal signals received from the Russian side regarding a possible delineation of spheres of influence. According to her, Moscow proposed that the US cease interfering in Venezuela’s affairs in exchange for recognition of Russia’s freedom of action in Ukraine. F. Hill stated that the proposals came informally – “through commentators and newspaper articles”. The essence of the

matter was that if the US wanted freedom of action within its own “sphere of influence”, in particular in Venezuela, then it would have to agree that Russia should be allowed to do the same in Ukraine. F. Hill noted that she was sent to Russia in order to reject this proposal. According to V.V. Boiko (2025), the proposal came amid tension between Caracas and Washington, when Moscow sent 100 military personnel and weaponry to Venezuela in support of N. Maduro. Thus, the “Putin Doctrine” is grounded in the denial of the sovereign equality of states and the pursuit of a division of spheres of influence, which poses a potential threat to the Baltic states, Poland, Kazakhstan, and other post-Soviet states.

China’s hegemonic claims in East Asia and other regions. Under present geopolitical conditions, the process continues whereby the People’s Republic of China – a new “hegemon” in East Asia – is being politically, economically, and militarily strengthened; since the beginning of the 21st century it has been gradually acquiring the characteristics of a fully-fledged “great power”, comparable to the US, which until recently was the sole pole of the world’s unipolar system. Contemporary China openly declares its exclusive claims to a broad presence in, and control over, such regions of the world as the South China and East China Seas, Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait, and even the African continent. The continuing political, economic, and military rise of this country, against the backdrop of a gradual reduction of US influence in these regions given D. Trump’s partly isolationist policy, as well as that of leading European countries, may lead to the formation of a “new doctrine of limited sovereignty” linked to China’s hegemonic ambitions. These ambitions of the “new hegemon” may extend far beyond the East Asian region, reaching into South and Central Asia, the African continent, and Russia, should the latter undergo further weakening, genuine federalisation, or confederalisation as a result of objective processes of its possible decentralisation (or disintegration). China regards itself as the leader of the states of the so-called Global South, which represents a certain alternative to the coalition of more than 50 countries known as “Ramstein”, which supports Ukraine in its confrontation with the Russian aggressor, as well as the “Coalition of the Willing” (more than 30 countries), a grouping predominantly of European NATO countries together with Australia, Canada, and Japan, created in 2025 to support Ukraine, guarantee its security, and potentially establish an international peacekeeping mission on its territory (China is turning Africa..., 2026). The likelihood of China formulating and officially declaring a similar doctrine will increase as the country’s military-political and economic strength continues to grow. This process will be accompanied by a deepening of contradictions between the national interests of the US and the PRC as leading global actors, above all in strategically important regions. Among the most sensitive zones of their geopolitical rivalry are the Malacca Strait, the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the Strait of Hormuz.

The PRC is gradually turning Africa into its manufacturing appendage. As of 1 May 2026, it has fully abolished import duties for 53 African states. The only country to which this preferential regime does not apply remains Eswatini (the Kingdom of Swaziland), which maintains

official relations with Taiwan. In parallel, Beijing is increasing direct investment. In 2025, investment by Chinese companies in manufacturing projects in Africa reached USD 12.3 billion, comprising 64 projects in metallurgy, textiles, solar energy, and electric-vehicle manufacturing. Over 2023-2025, the total volume of these investments exceeded those of the US and Europe combined (Allison, 2017). Certain actions and statements by President D. Trump, who over the first year and a half of his second term has increasingly taken on the features of an authoritarian leader, indicate a dangerous inclination on the part of the current American regime – to the detriment of the interests of its long-standing democratic NATO partners – to resort to “deals” with the dictators of Russia and the PRC regarding a new division of the world into zones of “exclusive interests” of these three situational autocracies. At the same time, it may be supposed that, given the 250th anniversary of the existence of the US as an independent state (marked on 4 July 2026), the country’s accumulated vast democratic experience and its correspondingly powerful and extensive democratic institutions will serve as a reliable barrier against this Great Power sliding into prolonged authoritarianism.

“Pentarchy” as one prospective model of the future world order. Such developments may indicate the final decline of a world order founded on rules, international law, and the principle of the “supremacy of the force of law over the law of force”. A clear reversal towards Realpolitik is under way. There is a genuine danger that, in the new world order, “the law of force” and “deals” between strong authoritarian countries will prevail, as was the case over previous centuries when Realpolitik dominated, until the so-called “end of history”. Today’s US, PRC, and Russia share a readiness for such a new world order, one in which preference is given to force rather than to law. What remains unsettled is merely the division of the world into priority zones of influence. Evidently, these questions were in one way or another discussed during the American President’s visit to Beijing on 13-15 May 2026. It appears that Russia – declining, yet still “great” by virtue of its nuclear power, the size of its territory, and its natural resources – has clearly determined its position in this respect. It lays claim to control over the territories of the former USSR and dreams of restoring its quasi-empire. The US, in the person of the D. Trump administration, has clearly determined the priority of controlling the entire Western Hemisphere. At the same time, regions such as East and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa lie at the intersection of the priority interests of the US and China. As for Russia, being the weakest player of the three, it is gradually losing its influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. At the same time, within the aforementioned triangle, D. Trump has not abandoned hope of a scenario of the so-called “reverse Kissinger”, which involves attempting to draw Russia away from the PRC and to build an alliance with Putin against China’s hegemonic claims. In strategic perspective, an alliance between the US and Russia against China appears conceivable given China’s historical and territorial claims against the Russian Empire, but not in today’s world, where the connection between Russia and China appears fairly strong and justified for both sides. Although no fundamental shifts or agreements were reached

during the recent successive visits of the US President (13–15 May) and the Russian President (20 May 2026) to China, the very fact of a marked increase in the frequency of such meetings within this triangle may attest to the evident priorities of the two internationally recognised great powers – the US and the PRC – and the third, Russia, which, despite substantial economic difficulties and losses in the Russo-Ukrainian war, is still attempting to present itself as a separate pole of the emerging multipolar world. During the meeting in Beijing, the Chairman of the PRC, Xi Jinping, cautioned US President D. Trump against falling into the “Thucydides Trap”. This geopolitical concept describes a situation in which the rise of a new power and its ambition to alter the position of the hegemonic state substantially increase the risk of military confrontation between them. The Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta is regarded as a historical example of such confrontation (Stamouli, 2026). Among the states capable, in the longer term, of acquiring the status of an independent centre of power in the new world order, India deserves particular attention. Despite the absence of clearly formulated global foreign-policy ambitions, its rapid economic, demographic, and military-political rise creates the preconditions for the formation of a separate pole of the emerging multipolar international system.

The EU may be regarded as a potential institutional counterweight to the scenario of dividing the world among great authoritarian powers, since it continues to embody the values of liberal democracy and the rule of law. At the same time, its capacity to establish itself as an independent global centre of power will depend on internal unity, political will, and the sufficiency of economic, military, human, and natural resources. There is at present no definitive answer as to the EU’s ability to fulfil this role. On 24 April 2026, French President E. Macron emphasised the need for the consolidation of European states and a shift towards more decisive action amid intensifying tensions with the US, Russia, and China (Roussi, 2026). Similarly, the head of European diplomacy, Kaja Kallas, stated on 17 May 2026 that the US, China, and Russia dislike a united European Union, because Europe is far stronger when it holds together. She stressed the importance of EU unity (Rusychenko, 2026). At the beginning of May 2026, President of the European Council António Costa, speaking at a meeting of the European Political Community in Yerevan, emphasised that Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East necessitate a comprehensive approach to European security. In his assessment, Europe must play a leading role in defending the rules-based international order, the Charter of the United Nations (UN), and the principles of multilateralism. He also drew attention to the simultaneous growth of global instability and multipolarity, which requires the expansion of international partnership in order to secure sustainable peace and shared prosperity. Canada was cited as an example of such partnership, given that it shares with Europe an orientation towards international law, international humanitarian law, and the central role of the UN system (Davos 2026: Special address..., 2026). The EU itself, notwithstanding certain reservations and internal inconsistencies, corresponds fully to the role of a global pole within the emerging new world order.

Emblematic in this respect was the speech delivered by Canadian Prime Minister M. Carney on 20 January 2026 at the World Economic Forum in Davos. In it, he outlined the principal features of the new world order taking shape amid global instability: increased pressure exerted by strong states on weaker ones, the raising of territorial claims and the use of threats of force, including against allies, and the gradual release of great-power policy from international-legal constraints. In M. Carney’s view, the world has entered an era of great-power rivalry, in which the rules-based order is progressively losing its significance. Strong states pursue the opportunities available to them, while weaker states are compelled to accept the conditions imposed upon them. Under such circumstances, countries often choose a strategy of concession and accommodation, calculating that loyalty to stronger states will help guarantee their security (Davos 2026: Special address..., 2026; Gujer, 2026). The most influential states are increasingly departing from their international obligations whenever compliance with them conflicts with their national interests. This attests to a systemic crisis of the existing world order and to a weakening of multilateral institutions, in particular the UN and the World Trade Organization, on which medium-sized states have traditionally relied in addressing collective problems. Under these conditions, states are seeking to strengthen strategic autonomy and to expand the instruments for protecting their own sovereignty, which increasingly depends not only on international norms but also on the capacity to withstand external pressure. Accordingly, international interaction is gradually shifting from universal institutions towards flexible coalitions of states united by common interests and a readiness for concerted action. “Middle powers” need to coordinate their actions, since the absence of their participation in shaping international decisions increases the risk of their being turned into objects of great-power policy. Amid rivalry among the superpowers, they face a choice: to compete for the support of the leading centres of power, or to unite in order to defend their own interests and preserve the independence of their foreign-policy course. At the same time, the growing role of military force does not negate the significance of legitimacy, institutional integrity, and adherence to international rules, which may remain important assets provided they are used collectively (Gujer, 2026). Thus, the formation of a multi-centred world order is accompanied by intensifying competition among the leading powers, the weakening of universal international institutions, and the growing role of coalitions, which at the same time creates opportunities for the EU and for middle powers to consolidate and defend their strategic autonomy. The emerging new world order may take on a multipolar configuration with five principal centres of power: the US, China, the EU, India, and the RF. Compared with the bipolar system of the Cold War era, such a model is less stable and requires the constant balancing of interests and the adjustment of mechanisms of interaction. An additional risk factor is the possibility of dominance by the state that most consistently employs forceful methods and disregards international-legal constraints. E. Gujer (2026) describes this as the “Putin effect”, whereby aggressive actions become possible owing to the absence of sufficiently effective

deterrence mechanisms. In this context, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was a consequence of the failure of international actors to prevent the implementation of the RF's aggressive policy in a timely manner. A similar logic can be traced in US actions with regard to Iran, since none of the leading centres of power – China, the EU, or the RF – possessed sufficient capability or political readiness to restrain them. As regards Russian aggression against Ukraine, it may be suggested that the US and China possessed certain instruments of influence over Moscow but did not employ them to the full extent.

Thus, the global “pentarchy”, that is, the interaction of five leading centres of power, despite its potential instability and security risks, may prove to be a more balanced model than the US-China-Russia triangle. At the same time, the probability of armed conflicts similar to the war in Ukraine or the confrontation in the Persian Gulf may increase in the coming years. This attests to a further deterioration of the global security environment, though it does not necessarily mean that regional crises will escalate into a world war. It is more likely that conflicts will occur more frequently while predominantly retaining a regional or local scale. The analysis conducted has shown that the concept of “limited sovereignty” retains its

relevance, merely changing the forms of its political and ideological justification. From the “Monroe Doctrine” and the “Brezhnev Doctrine” to the contemporary approaches of the US, Russia, and China, a common tendency can be traced towards entrenching the privileged spheres of influence of great powers. The “Donroe Doctrine”, in this context, reflects Washington's aspiration to restore its dominance in the Western Hemisphere and to strengthen its freedom of foreign-policy action. At the same time, this practice creates a dangerous precedent for other centres of power, which may use similar logic to justify interference in the affairs of neighbouring states. This accelerates the erosion of international law, weakens multilateral institutions, and increases the vulnerability of small and medium-sized states. Under these conditions, strategic autonomy, regional cooperation, and the formation of resilient coalitions capable of defending sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the right of states to make independent foreign-policy choices acquire particular importance. An important stabilising role in the new configuration could be played by the EU and India, provided they are able to consolidate their resources, political will, and commitment to international-legal mechanisms for conflict resolution and the strengthening of global security.

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