

# What Is the Monroe Doctrine – and Why It Suddenly Matters Again

- Why it's resurfacing now: power politics is being said out loud
- The most important change is not a policy detail. It is language.

## Trump revives centuries-old doctrine that shaped US-Cuba relations



([https://static.wixstatic.com/media/5fce4c\\_900a9f7a5ae545cabbabd17e6b9bfa2e~mv2.png/v1/fill/w\\_980,h\\_980,al\\_c,q\\_90,usm\\_0.66\\_1.00\\_0.01,enc\\_avif,quality\\_auto/5fce4c\\_900a9f7a5ae545cabbabd17e6b9bfa2e~mv2.png](https://static.wixstatic.com/media/5fce4c_900a9f7a5ae545cabbabd17e6b9bfa2e~mv2.png/v1/fill/w_980,h_980,al_c,q_90,usm_0.66_1.00_0.01,enc_avif,quality_auto/5fce4c_900a9f7a5ae545cabbabd17e6b9bfa2e~mv2.png))

For years, the United States spoke about the Western Hemisphere in the language of partnerships, democracy, and multilateral order. Recently, President Trump spoke in the language of ownership.

When senior U.S. officials repeat “this is our hemisphere,” the message is not just rhetorical muscle. It is a throwback to an older geopolitical instinct – one that has a name, and a long history: **the Monroe Doctrine**. (<https://conven.org/romania/news/what-is-the-monroe-doctrine-and-why-it-suddenly-matters-again/>)

**Donald Trump has revived the Monroe Doctrine a decade after the Obama administration said the policy was "over". (Reuters: Evelyn Hockstein)**

For much of his second term, US President Donald Trump has sought to expand the influence of the US in the Western Hemisphere, **including Australia.**

His ambitions have stretched from eyeing off Greenland and the Panama Canal, to forcing a change of government in Venezuela.

But even with the US military occupied in a war in the Middle East, he has begun to eye a new target, closer to home.

"Cuba's got problems," Trump declared [during a speech earlier this month.](#)

"On the way back from Iran, ... we'll have [the USS Abraham Lincoln] come in, stop about 100 yards offshore, and they'll say, 'Thank you very much. We give up!'"

It's not all talk. (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-05-24/trump-revives-monroe-doctrine-history/106711966>)

## **The shield and sword**

Nations across the Americas spent the early 19th century shrugging off their European colonisers.

The US drove offensive British forces out of the country to conclude the War of 1812 — a conflict Americans considered critical to their independence, despite having started it.

Between 1821 and 1822, 10 Latin American colonies broke away from Spain and Portugal and declared independence.

So, when US president James Monroe stood before Congress for his 1823 State of the Union address, he declared the Western Hemisphere closed to future colonisation efforts, adding that the US would consider any European interference a hostile act.

The statement was of little consequence for the great powers of Europe, but it became a longstanding tenet of US foreign policy, known as [the Monroe Doctrine.](#)

While Monroe's words were meant as a "defensive shield" of the Americas from outside forces, several of his successors have gone on to [interpret the doctrine as more of a "sword"](#) used to expand US influence and control over the region.

President Trump is using the Monroe Doctrine to reestablish America's control over the west and ensured its interests remained protected.

In the wake of US strikes in Venezuela and the capture of its president Nicolás Maduro, [Trump said](#) "American dominance in the Western Hemisphere will never be questioned again".

"That echo of 'Make America Great Again' ties back to where the Monroe Doctrine came from," Deborah Shnookal, a Latin America historian and research fellow at the University of Melbourne, said "It came from the US coming together as a single nation, asserting itself with pride in the aftermath of the Declaration of Independence and so on.

**"So, it is back to that great imperial power. 'We're going to run our hemisphere the way we want, and it belongs to us'."**