

# Dunroe Doctrine Devolution: The US Grand Strategy Reset to Retest Global Order

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## Abstract

*The US National Security Strategy (NSS) 2025<sup>1</sup> introduces the Trump Corollary to 1823-Monroe's Doctrine, the "Dunroe Doctrine," marking a sharp shift from global leadership to hemispheric primacy and transactional alliances. This strategy reframes relations with China, Russia, Europe and India, prioritises economic nationalism, and demands greater burden-sharing from partners. The article analyses how this reset challenges established alliances and tests the resilience of the global order, raising critical questions about the future of international stability.*

## Unfolding of the US National Security Strategy (NSS) 2025

On January 3, 2026, the world woke to news of a US surgical armed intervention in Venezuela to capture Venezuelan President Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. They were flown out of the country to be tried under US laws for narco-terrorism conspiracy, cocaine importation, and weapons offences. This 'Operation Absolute Resolve' was nothing but an enactment of the 29-page US National Security Strategy (NSS) 2025, released on December 4, 2025. The sudden impact of the document is being felt by allies and adversaries alike. European leaders who condemned the document for its harsh critique of allied democracies are scrambling over Greenland's security, while Moscow and Beijing are also feeling the impact on their investment in the US backyard in Latin America. The NSS 2025, which has unfolded openly throughout 2025, marks a stark departure from post-Cold War American grand strategy. It has abandoned decades of carefully crafted US multilateral leadership in favour of explicit transactionalism and hemispheric primacy.

## Strategic Recalibration: Dunroe Doctrine

The 2025 NSS appears to be a more pragmatic document, wedded to realpolitik. It fundamentally rejects the "major power competition" framework defined by both Trump's 2017 NSS and Biden's 2022 approach. The current strategy reduces China and Russia from systemic threats to mere transactions and spheres of influence. The document draws heavily on the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, referred to as the "Trump Corollary", which prioritises control of the Western Hemisphere and replaces Europe with China. The Trumpian twist, referred to as the "Dunroe Doctrine", acknowledges the limits of global reach while intensifying focus on border security, economic nationalism, and selective engagement.

The strategy recasts China as a mere economic rival in need of trade correction, abandoning decades of bipartisan clarity about its political system and human rights record. It downplays Russia's aggression and revisionism, substituting talk of

'strategic stability' and a swift end to the Ukraine war, while shifting blame onto Europeans rather than acknowledging Moscow's responsibility.

### **Transactional Burden-Shifting as Doctrine**

The NSS 2025 has sought to balance the budgetary pressures of American multi-front engagement, created by NSS 2017<sup>2</sup>, by openly codifying transactional statecraft. The strategy directly criticises past approaches: "Our elites badly miscalculated America's willingness to shoulder forever global burdens to which the American people saw no connection to the national interest". Burden-shifting is the new mantra. Alliance commitments are subject to partners meeting defence spending targets and aligning export controls.

**Europe: Civilisational Critique and Strategic Downgrade.** NSS 2025 warns harshly that Europe, as a continent, faces "civilisational erasure" that exceeds its economic decline. It relegates Europe from a strategic anchor of the transatlantic security architecture to a liability, calling for burden sharing and political correction. At the Hague Summit in June 2025, the US urged its NATO allies to commit annually to 5% to meet core defence requirements and to double defence-related spending by 2035, moving beyond the 2% guideline of 2014 (NATO, 2025)<sup>3</sup>. Some European analysts believe that a strong transatlantic relationship is "no longer thought critical to US national security". This perception has been further compounded by the US push over the Greenland takeover and the ambiguity surrounding Ukraine's security.

**Indo-Pacific: Economic Competition Over Ideological Contest.** NSS 2025 pivots the Indo-Pacific from values-centric coalition-building to a commerce-centric contest. It elevates supply-chain resilience, trade rebalancing, and tech controls, while downplaying democratic arrangements. Simultaneously, it presses allies to "pay more, do more" through the Quad and AUKUS frameworks to sustain deterrence around Taiwan and the First Island Chain. This strategic retreat from both Biden's normative coalition-building and Trump's 2017 military-centric Indo-Pacific posture creates friction and risks undermining coalition cohesion, even as tariff threats strain relations with key partners, including Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. For India, this shift weakens the Quad's political values foundation and increases pressure to assume greater security and economic responsibilities without an assured US commitment. China's Indo-Pacific concerns reduce New Delhi's short-term risks. However, the long-term play of the Indo-Pacific strategic calculus is likely to test India's strategic autonomy and multi-alignment strategy.

### **China and Russia: Divergent Impressions of American Intent**

Chinese analysts view NSS 2025 as a strategic streamlining to overcome "loss-making" commitments through cost-cutting and to refocus resources to retain technological dominance and economic coercion. Beijing is more circumspect about the document's milder ideological pitch, while recognising that a leaner, tech-centred US posture could pose a more formidable long-term challenge than dispersed global interventionism.

The Russians perceived the document's framing as largely aligned with the Kremlin's preferences for spheres of influence and a negotiated settlement with Ukraine. The

NSS 2025 treats Russia as a regional actor rather than a peer competitor. Additionally, it omits mention of Russia's strategic nuclear arsenal, despite Putin's plans for a New START extension and strategic stability talks in autumn 2025. The Russian assertion seems manageable to Washington, which may create trouble if the crack widens within NATO over the Dunroe Doctrine.

### **West Asia: Transactional Realism and Conflict Stabilisation**

In West Asia, NSS 2025 adopts a pragmatic, interest-driven approach, prioritising stability and energy security, while de-emphasising democracy promotion and human rights conditionality. The strategy claims credit for "unprecedented peace" breakthroughs, including Israel-Iran de-escalation and Gaza stabilisation, while avoiding commitments to nation-building or normative projects. The establishment of the Trump Board of Peace to manage Gaza's peace signals a shift away from multilateral frameworks like the UN toward a US-centric conflict-management mechanism, in which regional priorities are subordinated to US strategic priorities. The strategy emphasises preventing adversarial dominance of energy chokepoints while minimising direct US military involvement in regional disputes. By prioritising swift conflict control over addressing underlying grievances, it produces only short-term calm rather than a durable resolution.

### **India's Diminished Profile and the Pakistan Omission**

NSS 2025 references India four times, primarily regarding trade improvements and the Quad's contributions to Indo-Pacific stability. This marks a notable downgrade from the 2017 Trump strategy, which gave India "pride of place" and emphasised its emergence as a "leading global power." The climbdown indicates a reassessment of US interest in testing India's commitment to its NSS 2025. The tone of the document remains transactional while recognising India as a valuable maritime partner and an alternative supply chain to China, yet it faces pressure on defence decoupling and commercial reciprocity.

Pakistan is mentioned only once, in the context of the disputed May 2025 ceasefire claim. The virtual omission of any condemnation of Pakistan's counterterrorism gaps or of conditioning engagement on nuclear stewardship, prominent themes in 2017, marks a diplomatic shift. For New Delhi, the silence reflects ambiguity amid the US's recalibrated prioritisation of South Asian security disputes and India's commitment to addressing its own multi-front contingencies.

Indian analysts view this shift with marked ambivalence: Pakistan's marginalisation and the Quad's continuity are welcomed, but the downgraded leadership role and overt transactionalism are seen as undermining New Delhi's strategic autonomy. The strategy pushes India towards higher defence spending and expanded maritime commitments without guaranteeing access to technology or strategic elevation, forcing New Delhi to manage alignment pressures while safeguarding multi-alignment autonomy amid renewed U.S.-Russia "strategic stability" bargaining.

### **Testing Trust: Strategic Rationality vs. Alliance Fragmentation**

NSS 2025 achieves internal coherence around sovereignty-first principles, economic nationalism, and burden redistribution. It rationalises a reduced global presence through a narrow definition of interests and acknowledges fiscal constraints on maintaining the welfare state and global military commitments simultaneously. However, this rationality risks fracturing alliance structures built post-World War II.

Treating partnerships as protection schemes and conditional security guarantees for economic performance is set to undermine collective defence psychology that sees the US as the leader. European rearmament may accelerate, but absent trust in American reliability, will likely prioritise talk of a European strategic autonomy.

In the Indo-Pacific, a business-first framing combined with tariff threats creates contradictory pressures. The allies are expected to shoulder greater defence burdens while absorbing the economic costs of US trade protection.

For middle powers like India, NSS 2025 creates risks in navigating the multi-alignment calculus amid US-Russia détente and US-China economic confrontation. The strategy's explicit embrace of spheres of influence may paradoxically validate India's strategic autonomy, but it will demand greater defence expenditure and technological alignment. Navigating this terrain will test India's hedging capacity while demonstrating its contributions to the Indo-Pacific, avoiding entrapment in trade wars, and preserving relationships despite American pressure.

The document's policy shift from global order guarantor to hemispheric power balancer is epochal. However, the document's omission of nuclear arms control dialogue beyond vague "strategic stability" invocations creates proliferation risks and crisis stability. By downplaying North Korea and Iran while neglecting Pakistan's arsenal, NSS 2025 creates blind spots in threat assessment that may prove costlier than the burdens it seeks to shed.

European countries are rapidly coming to terms with the reality of adaptation and adjustment amid Trump's tariff salvos on Greenland. The allies' trust is being tested at the altar of tariffs. Whether the NSS 2025 Dunroe Doctrine devolution proves visionary realism or strategic overreach remains the defining question of the Trump-led world order.

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<sup>2</sup> The White House (2017). National Security Strategy of the United States of America. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> NATO. (2025, June 25). *The Hague Summit Declaration*. Retrieved from <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2025/06/25/the-hague-summit-declaration>

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