

**POLITICS OF HEMISPHERIC SPHERE OF INFLUENCE : A REAPPRAISAL
FROM THE LENSES OF DONROE'S DOCTRINE**

BY

OKOSI,SAMSON CHUKWUDEBELU

GOU/U22/IRE/572

**A RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, GODFREY OKOYE
UNIVERSITY, ENUGU**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.) DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

PROJECT SUPERVISOR: REV.FR.IKENNA OGBUKA

JULY, 2026.

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DECLARATION

**I kosi,Samson Chukwudebelu hereby declare that this research project titled: “Politics
Of Hemispheric Sphere Of Influence : A Reappraisal From The Lenses Of Donroe's
Doctrine” was written and presented by me in the Department of Political Sciences and
International Relations, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu state, and has not been
presented anywhere else for the purpose of acquiring any degree in International
Relations carried out under the supervision of REV. FR. DR. Ikenna Ogbuka.**

OKOSI, SAMSON CHUKWUDEBELU

DATE

(STUDENT)

APPROVAL PAGE

**This is to certify that this project entitled “Politics Of Hemispheric Sphere Of Influence :
A Reappraisal From The Lenses Of Donroe's Doctrine” submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.S.c) in International Relations
has been examined and approved by the Department of International Relations, Godfrey
Okoye University.**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study would not have been achieved without the assistance of numerous committed individuals that are worth mentioning. My deepest gratitude goes to God for his guidance, provision and grace throughout the duration of this program.

Gratitude goes to my wonderful and easy-going supervisor, Fr. Dr. Ikenna Ogbuka, for painstakingly teaching me the basics of research writing. He was there for me at every point instructing and directing me on the right things to do in making this study a success. May God richly bless you.

To all my lecturers in the department who really played quintessential role in my life in the past four years, may God continually bless you all. Prof. Samuel Ugwuozor (my wonderful Head of Department), your paternal guidance and support are inspiring. The likes of Rev. Sr. Dr. Lucy Umeh, Dr. Kingsley Ezechi, Dr. N.C Mbaeze, Dr. Mrs. Ifedi, Mr.

Okonkwo W.O. I will always remember. My appreciation also goes to the Dean of Management and Social Science, Assoc. Prof. John Odo and to my Lecturers, Dr. Kingsley Ezechi, Dr. N.C Mbaeze, Mr. Anthony Onyishi, Dr. (Mrs.) Fransisca Ifedi, Rev. Fr. Dr. Ikenna Ogbuka, Prof. Ochioha, Mr. Okonkwo W.O, Mr. Ajibo C.C, the Secretary of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Mrs Chioma has also contributed immensely to my educational advancement.

I also want to thank my Mom, Ifeoma Eunice Okosi, without whom I would not be here. Without her support, I wouldn't have made it this far. She has taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time.

To my siblings, Uche and Kosi, and my cousins, Miss Ijeoma, Miss Chinecherem, Mrs. Obiozo, Miss Ada, and many others too numerous to mention, your support, love, prayers, and care saw me through to the very end. I love you all. To my beloved uncles,

Hon. Nwachief Onyebuchi, Mr. Eze Chidera, and Mr. Chukwudi Ejike, I sincerely appreciate your love and encouragement. Special thanks also go to my grandfather, Mr. Innocent Ejike, who continually encouraged and supported me throughout my years of study. Special thanks to my friends, Frank, Mmeso, Arinze, Goodnews, Judith, and Glory, as well as my classmates, roommates, uncles, and aunties. Thank you all for your unwavering support. May God bless you all abundantly.

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this paper is to shed light on the role of hemispheric spheres of influence in international politics by analyzing the interaction of Donroe's Doctrine with the original Monroe Doctrine even in our modern world. One of the issues examined is a set of measures inspiring the U.S. President Trump's foreign policy. Donald Trump's administration, on the one hand, wished to uphold the position of the U.S. as the main power in the western hemisphere through a quite aggressive and interventionist concept known as the American Shield, on the other hand, this idea of the American Shield was also the weapon to counter the implementation of the Chinese influence in the Latin American region which is the original area of the U.S. sphere of influence. The theoretical

background of the Research is Realist Theory, which is the theory of international relations, which best describes the role of states in the international system by explaining why states act in the way they do to attain power, ensure national interest and security, and outdo rivals. Qualitative descriptive research was the main research approach. The main research material is secondary sources, especially the kind of sources coming from textbooks, academic journals, and other written legal materials such as legislative materials, official speeches, policy documents, state publications, and reliable internet sources. The paper is based on the following questions: first, did Donroe's Doctrine enhance the principles of the Monroe Doctrine? Second, did the policies of the Trump government towards Venezuela successfully limit China's influence in Latin America? Through research, it has been found out that the core of Trump's foreign policy was a renewed commitment to the leadership of the hemisphere by various means including but not limited to diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions, immigration restrictions, and openly pointing out external influences mainly China and Russia that were considered undesirable. The paper also notes that despite the fact that most of the U.S. policies were focused on countering the increased presence of China in Latin America, China has significantly strengthened its economic and strategic position in the region which it has been the major source of source of tension between the two countries since the beginning of the 21st century. In short, the paper holds the view that Donroe's Doctrine is basically the Monroe Doctrine updated to the present-day context and, therefore, is a clear evidence of the persistent relevance of the mechanisms of spheres of influence, strategic rivalry, and the quest for regional supremacy that have always been the features of international relations.

Keywords: Donroe's Doctrine, Monroe Doctrine, American Shield, Hemispheric Sphere of Influence, U.S. Foreign Policy,

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Foreign policy is not a new feature of international politics. Since their first appearance, states have felt the constant pressure to defend themselves and at times, they have had to devise ways of preempting or attacking their enemies in order to survive. One could say that back then, the first states were probably quite small and weak and it was the military that, among other means, enabled a few individuals to expand their control over others and thus create the first states (Mearsheimer, 2019). When talking about the international state system, Waltz (2000) points out that security dilemma has become an inseparable element of it, given the author's grim picture of the international politics as a relentless power struggle and survival game among self-interested states. To be survival maximizers and at the same time suspicious of one another, especially because states cannot be certain of the exact intentions of others, is one of the reasons why anarchy leads to insecurity that gives rise to security dilemma and arms race (Waltz, 2000).

There has always been and to this day, a very intense competition of great powers to secure and advance their interests in foreign countries. On different occasions, strategic successes have been obtained through diplomatic negotiations, the use of force, economic sanctions, as well as the formation of political alliances among great powers coming from different parts of the world. It is this very aspect of the international system, the struggle for power, that has, among other things, been the basis of states' foreign policies throughout the ages (Walt, 2018; Mearsheimer, 2019). One of the most widely used terms to describe this kind of a rivalry is that of "sphere of influence". A dominant state through its political, economic and military power is able to defend its national interest against the effects of weaker states within its sphere of

influence, (which in effect is a kind of a territory) (Hensel, 2001). Globally powerful countries such as the UK, Russia, and the US, have historically at different times secured their safety and strategic interests in international politics through the possession of their respective spheres of influence.

The politics of the hemispheric sphere of influence became more clearly defined when the United States emerged as a player in the Western Hemisphere in the 19th century. After most Latin American countries freed themselves from the colonial grip of the Europeans, the US gradually became concerned with the possibility that the European powers might forcefully reassert themselves in the Americas. James Monroe, the president of the US in 1823, responded by establishing the Monroe Doctrine. The Doctrine was a warning to other European powers not to extend their control and influence in the Western Hemisphere. It further declared that the United States would consider any move by them to increase their presence in the Americas as a threat to the peace and security of the US (Hook & Spanier, 2018; Brands, 2018).

What the Monroe Doctrine stood for at first, was simply the latent defensive foreign policy of newly independent Latin American states who frantically wished to protect their sovereignty and independence. To many, the Doctrine was a courageous, defiant proclamation against European imperialism and foreign domination of America. It was, however, the gradual strengthening of the United States and its different interpretations of the Doctrine which led to the Doctrine's change into a major tool for the extension of U.S. influence in the hemisphere. In fact, the Doctrine has been hijacked to legally justify the military uses, political interventions and economic domination by the United States over the states of its less powerful neighbors (Crandall, 2019; Long, 2020).

The Monroe Doctrine was experiencing a series of modifications around the turn of the twentieth century. During the Spanish-American War, 1898, the United States came to the rescue of Cuba; it was a great advocate and even protector during the separation of Panama

from Colombia and the subsequent building of the Panama Canal; and generally, the United States invaded a number of countries, including Haiti, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. All these were the signs of America consciousness and willingness to taking the dominant power role in the Western Hemisphere. Many commentators have seen the transformation of the Monroe Doctrine from a policy that was geared towards protecting the region from European interference to a foreign policy that aimed at the political and economic domination of Latin America (Smith, 2016; Domínguez, 2020).

The Roosevelt Corollary was the extension given to the Monroe Doctrine of 1904. President Theodore Roosevelt regarded himself as the ultimate protector of the financial health and stability of the Latin American nations, even "intervening" in their internal affairs when he witnessed signs of unrest or financial problems. This policy, on a large scale made the U.S. the "cop" of the Western Hemisphere and also gave another reason for the American intrusions. Whereas the American leaders viewed these moves as aimed at ensuring regional stability and security, many of the Latin American countries have regarded them as imperialistic interventions and violations of their national sovereignty (Hakim, 2019; Walt, 2018).

The politics of sphere of influence, of course, did not come to an end with the termination of direct colonial rule. Rather, it remained a major factor in international relations during the Cold War and beyond. The USA and Soviet Union for example went to extremes to gain influence around the globe, ideologically and strategically. The main battlefield of the two superpowers during the Cold War was Latin America after the Cuban turn to Communism in 1959. The U.S. was afraid of communist ideas spreading all over the hemisphere so it supported some political and military actions that were aimed at stopping Communism in the region. The need for American hemispheric dominance in foreign policy considerations was well supported by this period (Gaddis, 2018; Mearsheimer, 2019).

This research represents an attempt to examine the hemisphere of influence politics which is a theme of the Monroe Doctrine re-assessment through a new lens. The paper mainly puts a spotlight on the changing emphasis of the doctrine as a policy instrument in the initial case of a protective foreign policy that later evolved into a policy asserting American dominance in the Western Hemisphere in a comprehensive manner. Furthermore, the paper delves into the doctrine's political, economic and strategic functions for Latin American countries and the aspiration that the doctrine still holds in the current international politics. Drawing on historical events on the one hand, and the current geopolitical situations on the other, the study seeks to gain a nuanced understanding of how powerful nations use their foreign policy doctrines to both project and maintain their influence at the regional level (Tokatlian, 2020; Nye, 2021). On top of that, the paper sets side by side the existing literature on power, security, and the relationship with regional dominance in order to propose further advancements. Besides, it points out the everlasting nature of hegemonic politics in the international system in which major powers still dominate strategic regions. Likewise, the paper discusses the broader issue surrounding the question of whether the Monroe Doctrine was an effective security policy or if it was just a tool for American imperialism (Brands, 2018; Corrales, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The battle for influence over Latin America has once again emerged as one of the key features of international politics nowadays. For the past, the United States had the strongest political, economic, and military dominance within the Western Hemisphere. This domination was so closely associated to the Monroe Doctrine which had, among others, the main provision in that external powers should not interfere in the affairs of the Americas. Although the doctrine was brought out in the 19th-century, its influence that not only determining American foreign

policy but also affecting the world has been continuous and will be so for a long time. Yet, the traditional American dominance in Latin America has recently been challenged by China's rise as a global economic power. China is increasingly establishing its footprints in the region through trade partnerships, infrastructure projects, lending, and investment. Many Latin American countries viewed China's engagement as an opportunity to develop their economies without the need to rely on the American presence. Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina are among those countries that have strengthened their economic and diplomatic relations with Beijing, which has, in turn, triggered concerns in Washington regarding the gradual loss of American influence within the hemisphere. This growing Chinese presence has created a serious geopolitical problem for the United States. Actually, American leaders and officials evaluate China's involvement in Latin America from the perspective of a political rather than an economic issue since, in their view, it is a strategy for China to penetrate America's traditional sphere of influence. Hence, Donald Trump's administration, among other things, resorted to foreign policy toughening with regard to America's interests in the hemisphere. Trump's "America Shield" policy reflected the US's determination to maintain hemispheric dominance and contain rival powers. By enforcing sanctions, exerting diplomatic pressure, and using strong rhetoric, the administration sought to consolidate American influence throughout Latin America. Due to its close ties with China and Russia, Venezuela became one of the main areas of this clash. The US saw the government of Nicolás Maduro as politically hostile and strategically dangerous to their regional interests. The crisis in Venezuela has initiated an intense conversation among experts, policymakers, and representatives of the international community. While one group of analysts argues that the US's actions directed at Venezuela are focused on the restoration of democracy and stability in the country, another group of analysts consider them to be part of the larger geopolitical game in which the US is working to weaken Chinese influence and reestablish American dominance in Latin America. This splitting of

opinion has turned Trump's foreign policy motives and outcomes in the region into a subject of wide speculation. Most of the existing research focuses on the traditional Monroe Doctrine without closely examining its contemporary reinterpretation by the Trump administration. There is quite a large number of scholarly articles on the US foreign policy in Latin America, but handful studies of them have viewed "Donroe's Doctrine" as a current embodiment of America's hemispheric strategy. This has resulted in a lack of knowledge on how past doctrines continue to shape present day geopolitical actions. In addition, very few studies have tackled the issue of the effectiveness of Trump's measures against Venezuela in restraining Chinese influence in Latin America. Despite the fact that the sanctions and diplomatic pressure have led to the collapse of the Venezuelan economy, China has remained firm in its commitment to the strategic interests in the region. This situation not only prompts us to re-examine America's renewed hemispheric strategy but also its adequacy within the current international system. This paper intends to investigate the politics of the hemispheric sphere of influence using Donroe's Doctrine as a lens. The objectives of this paper are, firstly, to analyze how Trump's America Shield on several occasions re-asserted the Monroe Doctrine and, secondly, to examine the move against Venezuela and whether it contributed to the reduction of Chinese influence in the Latin American hemisphere.

1.3 Research Questions

In connection with the research, here are the research questions we would like to address:

1. How Has Trump's American Shield reinforced James Monroe Doctrine in the 19th century
2. Has Trump's administration kidnap of Venezuela president reduced Chinese influence in Latin America?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The chief objective of the study is to analyze the political dimension of the hemisphere of influence in terms of Donroe's Doctrine.

Looking back at the hemispheric sphere of influence of Donroe's Doctrine having been a great positive thing for Latin America.

The third aim is to assess if with the kidnapping of the Venezuelan president by Trump's administration has limited China's hemispheric influence in Latin America.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is, in a number of ways, profound in the use of international relations machinery and foreign policy analysis. In recent years, competition among the most powerful countries on the planet seeking ways to protect their existing influences and also to expand their influences to other strategic parts of the world has become a defining characteristic of global politics. Latin America, once again, is one of the main regions where global powers are competing for supremacy. Hence, it is more necessary than ever to dissect the politics of hemispheric influence.

As a starter, this paper is an excellent contribution towards enriching academic knowledge through the historical analysis of the Monroe Doctrine. Our paper, however, is not only that but also looks at the re-emergence of Donroe's Doctrine in the foreign policy of the U.S. today; therefore, through this, the paper establishes a link between the traditional foreign policy and the current geopolitical developments.

The second point is that this publication is a magnificent reference guide for both students and researchers of international relations, political science, diplomacy, and strategic studies, as it offers examples of how great powers conduct themselves on the global stage. It is a fundamental principle of global politics that powerful states, which are aware of the regions they consider strategically important, will hardly give up these regions. Instead, they are always engaged in seeking and developing new ways of exerting influence. This paper illustrates how the United States is still very much determined to protect its hemispheric interests in the face of a more assertive Chinese presence in Latin America.

Additionally, this research is informative as it enhances the scholarship on China's economic rise and the emergence of China as a superpower. The main purpose of understanding the influence of the most powerful country in the world is to figure out the changes in the political-economic balance of the world that have been brought about by China's presence; this impedes the understanding of such a dynamic nature of change as seen in the difference between Washington and Beijing, especially with regards to Trump's policy towards Venezuela.

This work is also important to policymakers and diplomats because decisions in foreign policy are rarely made in isolation. Rather, they are the outcome of a combination of factors such as history, national interest, security, and strategy that have shaped the choices made by countries. Via this work, policymakers will comprehend how old doctrines continue to influence decision-making in the international realm. Besides, they will be also sensitized to the possible consequences of geopolitical rivalries on countries like Venezuela, which are often the sites of bigger power struggles.

For researchers, this paper is a source of ideas about hemispheric politics and contemporary geopolitical doctrines for further research. The assertion that Donroe's Doctrine, though unofficial, alters geopolitical doctrines according to the characters and situations of political leaders is a fresh understanding of the reappearance of the old strategic principles under different political leaders and circumstances.

Finally, this paper is significant because it reflects the present state of the international system. There is a gradual move towards a highly competitive global order characterized by the continual efforts by major powers to gain influence in various regions of the world. Latin America, once more, is the main arena of this global rivalry. Keeping up-to-date with these developments should be done not only by scholars and policymakers but by anyone with a concern for world politics and the future of international relations.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Political spheres of hemispheric influences will be the central theme of this research interpreting Donald Trump's foreign policy doctrine. The paper will investigate American efforts to maintain and enhance strategic hegemonies in the Western Hemisphere from the point of view of the Trump US administration till 2021. It will argue that there is painting similarity between the continuation of the tradition of the United States' exercise of influence in the region by means of foreign policies of Trump while at the same time also showing new efforts of the use of the 'America First' policies.

The concept of the sphere of influence in international relations is a major theme of this study. The paper also considers the role the United States as a great power has played in exerting political, economic, diplomatic, and military influence over its neighboring countries and regions. To give real weight to the political differences across the hemispheres, this paper based its analysis of the international relations' sphere of influence on the current hemispheric politics.

This study is also philosophically analyzing Donald Trump's foreign policy doctrines regarding national sovereignty, economic nationalism, border security, and rivalry with other great powers. Attaining and employing these principles, the U.S. was able to engage the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in a more beneficial manner. Finally, the author also analyses the U.S. policy interventions towards Venezuela, Cuba, and other states prominent in the U.S. regional strategy.

Besides this, the paper explores the rising role of extra-regional powers, especially China and Russia, in the Western Hemisphere and discusses how the Trump administration confronted these challenges. The study attempts to find out whether these outside players have become a threat to the traditional U.S. influence and what the U.S. has done in terms of policy reforms to retain its position in the region.

Lastly, the paper explores the larger political and strategic implications of Trump's foreign policy for hemispheric relations. It looks at how these policies have impacted regional peace and stability, diplomatic relationships, economic intercourse, and the overall distribution of power within the hemisphere.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Firstly, the scope of the paper has been limited to the tenure of Donald Trump as the president of the United States. Despite talking about some other historical and contemporary issues, the work focuses predominantly on the Trump administration, thus not providing the main emphasis of other administrations' policy shifts.

The second limitation relates to the location, only the Western Hemisphere, with special emphasis on Latin America and the Caribbean region is covered. While there may be some references to other changes and international players, the study does not extensively deal with the United States' foreign relations with countries outside the hemisphere.

Another limitation arises from the problem of data availability. Diplomatic cables, intelligence assessments, and other government documents that are relevant to foreign policymaking might not have been declassified or released to the public. Thus, this study has mainly relied upon publicly available sources, such as official government documents, academic journals, policy reports, and reputable media.

Another drawback of the study concerns the heavy reliance on secondary literature. Primary data collection, especially at an undergraduate level, does not result in exhaustive long-term exposure. Therefore, the study mostly depends on accessible scholarly literature and documented facts, which might have varying interpretations of the events and policies.

In addition, what is known as the "Trump Doctrine" has proved to be an elusive concept for the scholars and there is not a single authoritative definition of it. Scholars and policy-makers mostly have their own interpretations of the doctrine; hence, this has most probably contributed

to the analytical framework employed in this study. This conceptual uncertainty, therefore, remains a major drawback when assessing the doctrine's impact on hemispheric politics.

Finally, both resource and time constraints may limit the number of detailed case studies. The paper may well be limited to only a few countries and policy issues which are most aligned with the objectives and thus it will be impossible to cover each and every country and political development within the hemisphere adequately. Therefore, the conclusions should be drawn with these limitations in mind.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Since it is key to the understanding of the whole research generally, it is the wise thing to explain the key terms of the research.

International relations as a field of study is full of ideas which might have different meanings to different scholars, few of them very different from the meanings that the governments and political actors have. Hence, the key terms of this research are defined under the context of the research topic in this section.

Hemispheric Influence Hemispheric influence means a single powerful country's political, economic, military and diplomatic power or influence over a certain geographic area. For instance, this research mainly considers the effect of the United States on Latin America and the entire Western Hemisphere.

This influence may be exercised through such means as economic aid, military collaboration, foreign policy instruments, diplomatic pressure, sanctions, or political interference. Throughout the American historical legacy, the main focus or target has always been the Latin American region where the US was expected to have a very limited influence of foreign powers.

Hemispherical influence simply refers to a powerful country in the region influencing the affairs and decisions of its neighbors in the region.

Sphere of Influence Sphere of influence: is a term commonly used to denote a geographical vicinity or region where a dominant country has the ability to affect the political, economic, or security decisions of weaker countries. This is one of those oldest truths of international politics which the great powers' competitions can even be linked to.

During the Cold War, USSR was able to exert a strong influence over Eastern Europe; similarly, USA dominated some parts of Western Europe and Latin America.

This is a study of America's view of Latin America as its sphere of influence.

Indeed, it is a notion to some extent explains the reason why in some circumstances, bigger states might respond violently to the actions of other states in the areas that they regard as "strategically important".

Donroe's Doctrine

The updated version of the Monroe Doctrine in a style of Donald Trump's is called Donroe's Doctrine. In this research, it is a notion used to describe Trump's international relations with Latin America especially Trump's aims to reestablish American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere and exclude the influence of other countries such as China and Russia.

As classical foreign policy Donroe's Doctrine is absent from the Classics in its classical form but is being used as an explanatory tool to reveal the similarities between Trump's policies and those of the traditional Monroe Doctrine.

The doctrine bases on following concepts:- America's strategic interests are a concern.- Actions must be taken to ensure the safety of American strategic interests.- A negative attitude is shown at foreign interferences in the hemisphere.- Regional hegemony is already being enforced.- There is both political and economic opposition to other powers, Just like the United States' Hemispheric policy of today is Donroe's Doctrine in fact.

Monroe Doctrine

Monroe Doctrine was a foreign policy initiated by James Monroe, the 5th president of the United States, in 1823. The doctrine warned the European nations not to further colonize or intervene politically in the Americas.

In the policy, it was stressed that if European powers were to breach or attempt to breach the political integrity of any of the newly independent or free states of the Western Hemisphere, such an action would be regarded as a hostile act towards the United States. Besides the original anti-colonial objective, the doctrine has served as the foundation for American political and military interventions in Latin America. It has been regarded by many scholars as one of the pillars of American dominance in the hemisphere.

This research employs the Monroe Doctrine to set the historical stage against which Donroe's Doctrine may be examined and deciphered.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy usually means a set of strategies, principles, decisions and activities that a country implements to deal with other countries. It also covers things like national interest, security, economic program and foreign relations.

Typically, foreign policy involves actions such as, diplomacy, signing trade agreements, creating military alliances, imposing sanctions, holding negotiations or participating in international cooperation. Nevertheless, we limit our analysis to Trump's foreign policy towards Latin America.

For one thing, foreign policy is significant because it constitutes the reflection of a state's conduct in the international community and it is also a very good way to show that a state is

making a real effort to protect its national interests whether from other states or even a real or perceived threat.

Geopolitics

Geopolitics is a term used to describe the study of how geographical features, power, and the strategic interests of a state affect international politics and the relations between states. It looks at how states compete for land, resources, influence and strategic advantage in various parts of the world.

In our context, geopolitics means the rivalry between the U.S. and China in Latin America and why Venezuela figures so prominently in this competition. Causes of geopolitical conflicts could be things like: natural resources, military bases, economic interests, regional security and strategic alliances.

This is important because the Geopolitical competition in the Western Hemisphere is one of the major themes of the research.

Latin America

Latin America refers to the part of the Americas where Romance languages are primarily spoken such as Spanish and Portuguese. Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Chile, Colombia and many others are countries of this region.

From a historical perspective, the U.S. has viewed Latin America as a key area for its foreign policy given the continent's proximity and political and economic strategic importance.

U.S. and China's struggle for influence in Latin America is the major theme of this research.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

This chapter discusses the fundamental concepts that the present research is based upon. Since the research centers on the re-assessment of the U.S. hemispheric influence in Latin America under President Trump and the relevance of the Monroe Doctrine in these times, the chapter presents the necessary background information on these terms to enable the reader to understand the subject matter better. Consequently, the chapter identifies and explains the main notions such as foreign policy, Monroe Doctrine, hemispheric influence, and hegemony which are part of the framework of international relations and American foreign policy in Latin America.

A conceptual review is one of the necessary components of a research as it not only explains the major terms used but also guides the direction of the study. Fred N. Kerlinger argues that ideas or concepts serve as tools for researchers to organize their thoughts and demonstrate the relationships among the subjects they are studying. However, in international relations, scholars may interpret a single idea differently based on their prior experiences, political inclinations, or ideological predispositions. That is why this chapter reveals these concepts alongside the historical involvement of the US in Latin America and the US-China rivalry in the Western Hemisphere scenario.

The U.S. policies continuously reflect the changes of responsibilities across the generations and these are also recreated by the figures on the speakers' platform. Besides tracing the history of the Monroe Doctrine and how time has caused its objectives and geographical focus to

change, this chapter also explores the concept of hegemony in order to portray the nature of power relations between dominant and weaker states in the international system. By incorporating these ideas, the chapter prepares the reader for the forthcoming discussion which is the main part of the research.

2.1.1 Foreign Policy

Nowadays, foreign policy is one of the main factors determining how states interact and how they act within the international system to meet their national interests. In fact, no Nation or State can carry out any responsibilities all by itself without the cooperation of others because in the world that is becoming increasingly interdependent and, at the same time, competitive, even the weakest nations find themselves not only interacting with other countries but also with international organizations, multinational companies, and non-state actors as they work to ensure their safety, achieve their economic goals, and maintain political stability (Hook & Spanier, 2018).

Therefore, foreign policy refers to the principles, programs, decisions, and actions of a state in its external relations. It is the lawful means by which a government might try to accomplish national objectives beyond their borders. At the international level, foreign policy is the decision-making process and the actions of the nation's political leaders in protecting the country's interests (Rosenau, 2018). In addition, Walt (2018) considers foreign policy as the means that states use in the international system to handle the threats/opportunities that might come their way.

Actually, foreign policy is an integral part of the concept of national interest protection. A state's foreign policy, through its instruments of power, seeks to accomplish goals such as national security, economic prosperity, defense of territorial integrity, and projection of political influence, diplomatic recognition, and strategic interests (Nye, 2021). Moreover, in

many cases, foreign policy reflects the ideology of the ruling party and the main political issues.

Besides that, foreign policy is not confined merely to the sphere of diplomacy. In fact, the components of modern foreign policy include:

2.1.2 Military strategy /Trade- Economic

Relations + Supporting trade/economic relations. International Assistance and development
Immigration: border control was a priority Cooperation in the field of Intelligence and Security
Technological Competition Influence of culture and ideas

Typically, States use a mix of the above-mentioned tools to win greater advantages for themselves in the international system (Mearsheimer, 2019).

Foreign policy has always fascinated scholars from different theoretical perspectives in the field of International Relations. According to the Realist perspective, foreign policy is designed and implemented mainly to achieve power, security, and survival goals in a world characterized by anarchy. To Hans Morgenthau, the prime function of foreign policy should be the service of national interests, which, from his perspective, equaled power (Morgenthau, 1948). Despite being written several decades ago, Morgenthau's points continue to have great significance in current foreign policy analysis because they focus on power politics and the survival of states.

However, some structuralists became a bit more explicit. For instance, Kenneth Waltz claimed that the international system would control states' behavior. Since no single state can achieve complete security, states are continuously seeking to get an upper hand and influence other states for strategic advantages (Waltz, 1979). Some Realist scholars, for example, John Mearsheimer, have recently come up with the notion that powerful states will attempt to exert

control over key areas so as to keep other states away from their sphere of interests, which is essentially the meaning of their security policy (Mearsheimer 2019).

Liberal scholars, on the other hand, argue that these liberal norms of "diplomacy, " "international institutions, " "economic cooperation, " and "interdependence" are the principal reasons behind the foreign policy actions of states. As per liberal theorists, the integration of the world and institutionalized cooperation in the international system can play an essential role in decreasing conflicts and promoting collective problem-solving (Keohane & Martin, 2019). Nevertheless, even in liberal setups which represent a cooperative environment, the strategic interests of powerful States continue to be the main concern and their motives still incorporate these interests. In addition, foreign policy is after all a changing concept, its variation over time is proof of it. It depends on leadership and the domestic political situation, the economic realities, the ideology as well as the development of global environmental factors. Democrats might decide to carry on the foreign policies of their predecessors and stick to the same policies or even totally change them (Hook & Spanier, 2018). This is exactly the kind of change that was made evidently in the U.S. foreign policy especially under the term of the U.S. President Donald Trump. The United States has been a significant player in world affairs since the end of the Second World War being one of the most powerful forces in the world politically. Varying parts of the world have witnessed the significant influence of U.S. foreign policy in areas, such as security arrangements, trade system, financial institutions, diplomatic alliances, and military partnerships (Ikenberry, 2020). American influence was spread through such institutions as: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), The International Monetary Fund (IMF), The World Bank, The UN system, International trade and financial systems. The U.S. has, therefore, through these institutions and strategic partnerships, become a world-power with tremendous influence in almost all continents of the world, especially Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America (Nye, 2021). The thing is that America

through different administrations' foreign policies has never been consistent to the end. Even the idea of what it means to serve American national interests has been defined very differently by different presidents. There are those who stress "multilateral cooperation" and "liberal internationalism", others who focus on "nationalism" and "military strength", and some even put "unilateralism" and "economic protectionism" forward (Walt, 2018). A major change came with the Trump administration in terms of the direction and tone of American foreign policy. Trump was the leader of the "America First" approach, " that meant giving priority to secure borders, supporting economic nationalism, tightening immigration, dominating strategic competition, and protecting domestic interests at the expense of global responsibilities. His administration was constantly rebelling the international bodies, criticizing the cost of alliances, imposing tariffs on trade partners, and taking a more confrontational stance towards opponents like China and Russia (Brands, 2018). On the domestic front, Latin America was the main focus of the renewed emphasis on regional security and influence in the hemisphere. In the policy discussions of the US regard were given to migration, drug trafficking, border security, socialism and the growth of China. Among the countries that were subjected to sanctions, diplomatic pressure and/or strategic containment were Cuba and Venezuela. These were seen as a continuation of American traditional geopolitics of the Monroe Doctrine and hemispheric supremacy (Crandall, 2019). Indeed, Trump's foreign policy was not just about following a few policies but a piece of a larger plan to maintain a strong U.S. presence in the Western hemisphere despite increased global competition. One cannot disagree that foreign policy is one of the main tools that help explain how states look for power, security, influence, and strategic advantage in the international arena. Most importantly, this concept is useful for understanding how the US defended its dominant position in the hemisphere during the Trump administration.

2.1.3 Hemispheric Influence

Another concept that is very relevant to this study is hemispheric influence. A state's power to shape political, economic, military, and diplomatic developments within a geographical region in order to safeguard its strategic interests where it has dominant control is called hemispheric influence. The influence of the United States on Latin America and the wider Western Hemisphere is mainly what this concept is about in this paper. The term hemispheric influence is strongly connected with the concept of a sphere of influence in International Relations. To keep their security and strategic interests free from threats by rival powers, powerful States will usually attempt to gain the upper hand in the regions close to them (Mearsheimer, 2019). Military alliances, economic partnerships, diplomatic pressure, political intervention, intelligence cooperation, or cultural dominance are some of the things that they might also use when trying to exert regional influence. Historically, the United States has been the dominant power within the Western Hemisphere. In fact, American power and influence were significantly developed during the 19th and 20th centuries by economic strength, military capacity, diplomatic efforts, technological breakthroughs, and the role in the founding of global organizations (Nye, 2021). Accordingly, Washington was able to shape the political and economic situations in most of Latin America and the Caribbean by means of these mechanisms. The Monroe Doctrine played a very important role in allowing the American hemisphere influence to be exercised. Due to discouraging the Europeans in interfering in the Americas, the doctrine slowly led to the US gaining operating power as strategic power in the region (Crandall, 2019). After that, America's dominance in geopolitical and economic activities stretched well beyond its security concerns. The U.S.' hemispheric influence was most closely identified with its many interventions in Latin America. To secure strategic interests and ensure a regional stability favorable to American influence were the

objectives of U.S. political or military actions in countries like Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic (Domínguez, 2020).

The notion of hemispheric influence assumed central strategic value during the Cold War era. The U.S. perceived an expansion of the Soviet Union's influence, especially communism, in Latin America as an almost immediate threat to not only the security of the region but also to its own dominance. That is why Washington relied on containment strategies to forcefully check ideological or military influences of the rival superpowers in the western hemisphere (Gaddis, 2018). This approach caused the U.S. to get involved in various conflicts and crises in the region. U.S. adopted anti-communist regimes, imposed sanctions, and intelligence operations were conducted throughout Latin America to ensure that the U.S. preserved its strategic advantage in the area (Walt, 2018).

Hemispheric influence in a way continues to be a significant factor in shaping American foreign policy. However, maintaining regional hegemony is becoming more and more difficult due to the tie-up of external powers and notably, China. As a matter of fact, over the last two decades, China has hugely extended its economic and diplomatic presence in Latin America through several different methods including infrastructure building, telecommunications cooperation, energy investments, mining, and trade agreements (Ellis, 2021).

For a number of Latin American countries that were looking at other options besides Western financial institutions and American-led economic arrangements, Chinese loan propositions were very attractive. Some Latin American countries including Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Venezuela strengthened their economic relations with China resulting in the growth of Chinese influence in the region (Frenkel, 2021). Such changes prompted concern among U.S. policy makers as an increase in Chinese presence is being seen as a challenge to the traditional dominance of the U.S. in the region. From a geopolitical perspective, U.S. strategists were

concerned that if China expanded its influence more widely, then Washington's ability to lead political and economic outcomes in the region might be compromised(Tokatlian, 2020).

President Donald Trump's government reacted to the situation by introducing actions targeted at regaining U.S. influence in these parts. Immigration along with border control and security, sanctions, and economic pressures, diplomatic engagements were all primary elements of this strategy. The administration's concern for the region's development was not limited only to economic or humanitarian aspects but also included wider geopolitical issues in terms of competition and influence. Thus hemispheric influence is a major factor in explaining the U.S. foreign policy direction towards Latin America. It gives insight into how powerful countries work to maintain strategic dominance over adjacent areas and at the same time resist rival encroachments. Also, it shows that the contest for regional supremacy is an element that still shapes international relations notwithstanding changes in global structures and diplomacy.

Also, hegemony is a term which essentially means dominance or leadership by a powerful state that has the capability to impose terms even on weaker states both at a regional level and the globe. Besides military might, hegemonic states possess economic, political, technological, and ideological powers sufficient enough to not only influence international events but also the conduct of weaker states who are dependent on them for their interests (Keohane, 2019). Actually, hegemony comprises much more than physical control. It goes as far as acknowledging the capacity of dominant states to exert control over international institutions, economies, political relations, and values as well as global norms. Frequently, hegemonic power is upheld not only through threats or punishment but also by legitimacy, consent, and by acting as the leader in institutions (Ikenberry, 2020).

Hegemony, as a concept, is closely related to Antonio Gramsci whose central thesis was that one can dominate through ideological and cultural leadership besides the use of force(Gramsci, 1971). However, although Gramsci mainly concentrated on domestic political power, his

insights have become a significant source for International Relations scholars in their understanding of global dominance and power relationships among states.

In International Relations, hegemons typically determine the international financial systems, security arrangements, trade networks, and diplomatic structures to perpetuate their strategic advantages (Nye, 2021). Hence, hegemony is the combination of material power plus institutional and ideological influence.

Simply put, United States has been the main global hegemon since World War II. The most extensive evidence of America's influence is manifested by a wide array of activities such as military alliances, economic institutions, technological innovation, cultural influence, and global financial systems (Ikenberry, 2020). These comprise: NATO, The International Monetary Fund (IMF), The World Bank, The United Nations system, Global trade and financial networks- all played a role in the expansion of US hegemonic influence in different world regions.

American hegemony in Latin America was largely built through a combination of the use of military force, economic power, diplomacy, and political interference. The USA has routinely played a major role in the shaping of regional politics through foreign aid, security partnerships, trade agreements, sanctions, and the support of allied governments (Hakim, 2019).

The Monroe Doctrine and various other US foreign policy strategies were employed to establish American hegemonic power in the Western Hemisphere by making it clear to potential rival powers that their establishment in the region would not be tolerated. Thus, Latin America was strategically incorporated into American security and geopolitical planning (Brands, 2018).

Nevertheless, hegemony is something that is never fully unchallenged and secure. History has shown that dominant powers not only have experienced main challenges from new contenders

looking for more influence within the international system. Today, the leading political issue is China as its rise is causing debates about the dimming of American hegemony.

China's advancement in the economy and its raising role in Latin America have already begun to change the way of hemispheric influence. Within the last two decades, China's infrastructure, mining, telecommunications, transport, and energy sector have significantly increased different countries of the region(Ellis, 2021).

Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Venezuela, among others, deepened their economic relations with China through various means of lending, development projects and trade.

These changes gave Latin American countries a chance to diversify away from the usual dependency on Western and American-led financial and economic systems (Frenkel, 2021).

For many American policymakers, what they saw as China's increased role was hardly just ordinary economic partnership. In fact, it was regarded as China's geopolitical expansion that may lead to reduction of America's very dominant hegemonic influence in the hemisphere (Tokatlian, 2020).

The Trump administration responded to these changes by strengthening American strategic influence and limiting foreign competition in Latin America.

Sanctions, tightening immigration, withdrawal of diplomacy, and economic protectionism were the parts of the wider efforts to maintain American hegemonic status in the region (Corrales, 2020).

That is why Trump's policy of "America First" was consistent with the major concern of hegemony.

Although stressing nationalism and unilateralism, the administration also had the intention of maintaining America's leading position not only in the Western Hemisphere but also in the global system as a whole.

2.1.4 Hegemony

Hegemony is very important for understanding modern international politics because it explains how powerful states can continue to hold sway, create different institutions, and handle strategic competition globally.

For the purpose of this research, the concept outlines the constant American American pursuit of Latin American domination in the wake of increasing geopolitical rivalry from China and other external powers.

2.1.5 Sphere of influence

Another very important concept that lies at the heart of this study is sphere of influence.

In International Relations, a sphere of influence is a geographical area where a powerful state exercises its political, economic, military or diplomatic dominance over weaker states for the protection of its strategic interests and the maintenance its regional advantage (Mearsheimer, 2019).

The notion is usually associated with power politics and geopolitical rivalry among major powers.

Historically, powerful nations extended their dominance over their neighbors or strategically important territories to secure military defense, economic access, political control and strategic supremacy.

Take for example the old and contemporary time when big powers such as Britain, Russia, France and the United States have all at some point created spheres of influence as part of their foreign policy and national security planning (Walt, 2018).

The maintenance of spheres of influence may be supported by various means such as: Military presence, Economic investment, Diplomatic, pressure Political alliances, Trade relations, Strategic agreements, Cultural and ideological influence

In fact, the different tools give dominant states a walk-in to initiate political and economic changes within the areas that they consider of utmost strategic importance.

In fact, the idea became very significant in the 19th and 20th centuries when colonial imperial powers competed for territorial expansion and global domination.

During those times, the great powers often partitioned various parts of the world into their zones of strategic control so that they would not be able to extend their spheres of influence to rival powers (Hook & Spanier, 2018).

If there is to be any example of the politics of sphere of influence in the Western Hemisphere it would only be the Monroe Doctrine.

Under the doctrine, the US eventually came to treat Latin America as a region where external powers would be discouraged from making political or military interventions.

As a result, over time, Washington came to view the hemisphere as part of its strategic environment and national security framework (Crandall, 2019).

This perspective constituted the dominant theme in American foreign policy for several decades.

The U.S. constantly intervened in Latin American political affairs and very strongly resisted any outside influences; for instance, when the policies of the Cold War period came into effect, American policymakers took a very firm stand against the Soviet presence in Cuba and Nicaragua since these welcomed developments were considered direct threats to America's hegemonic sphere of influence in the hemisphere (Gaddis, 2018).

The competition for spheres of influence continues to be a feature in international politics, even though formal colonialism has been fully dismantled for a long time.

The rivalry among the great powers now extends to non-military aspects such as trade, technology, infrastructure financing, energy partnerships, and strategic investments.

China becoming a big global player has resulted in a major change in the politics of influence in Latin America.

The Chinese infrastructure and other large scale investment projects have expanded rapidly in the last two decades reaching the point of mining, transport, telecoms, energy and affiliated sectors (Ellis, 2021).

China's trade ties and diplomatic relations with Latin America have in the meantime become firmer.

Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Venezuela are some of the countries that have increased their commercial relations with Beijing.

The outcome was that Washington began to worry as American legislators regarded these activities as a challenge to the U.S. un conventionally regional dominance (Tokatlian, 2020).

The Donald Trump administration opted for a defensive strategy by taking actions that would limit foreign involvement in the hemisphere.

These actions include sanctions, diplomatic pressures, immigration restrictions, and increased regional engagement as a whole.

They demonstrate America's endeavor to maintain its sphere of influence within Latin America (Corrales, 2020).

Hence, the concept of sphere of influence still provides a lot of explanatory power for the strategic competition between the United States and China in the Western Hemisphere.

This is because it is a very powerful analytical tool which not only explains the competition between the two major powers for regional dominance and geopolitical advantage but also the changes in the structure of international politics.

2.1.6 American Shield/Donroe's Doctrine

Another major concept relevant to this study is the idea of the American Shield, also described within this research as Donroe's Doctrine.

This concept points to a United States' renewed strategic effort to maintain hemispheric hegemony and shield its regional sphere of influence from external powers, especially China and Russia.

The term "American Shield" is used in this work to portray the defensive and strategic posture of the U.S. foreign policy during the Donald Trump administration.

It represents a broader geopolitical strategy of border tightening, resistance to external influences, safeguarding American interests, and reassertion of U.S. dominance within the Western Hemisphere.

The concept is closely linked with the roots of the Monroe Doctrine in history. The Monroe Doctrine was primarily aimed at ending European interference in the Americas, however, the American Shield has been adopted as a tool to achieve the same objective, uncluttered times. Instead of the U.S. opposing European colonization, it was mainly China's and other powers' expanding influences in Latin America that were to be curtailed (Brands, 2018). Therefore, the American Shield is a manifestation of continuity in U.S. policy rather than a totally new direction. Even though our means and the environment changed dramatically, the fundamental policy of the U.S. maintaining hegemony over the hemisphere remained quite constant. The administration of President Trump is the reflection of this policy: stricter immigration policies border wall establishment leading economic protectionism sanctions on Venezuela and Cuba opposition to socialist governments in Latin America diplomatic pressure indigenous to them, resistance to China's economic rise in the hemisphere.

Chinese expansion had become a particularly urgent matter from this perspective, because China was continuously investing more and more money in areas like infrastructure,

telecommunications, transport, mining, and energy in Latin America. American figures who worked in the area took notice of this and they started to worry that China was very stealthily pushing out U.S. geopolitical influence which had always been dominant in the region(Ellis, 2021).Through this lens, Trump's Latin America policy was a symbol of broader concerns that were within the ambit of the realist theory and revolved around power struggles and maintaining one's position in the region. Besides opposing the government and fostering democracy, the policy on Venezuela did also have a strategic element in countering China and Russia's attempts to gain a foothold in the region (Corrales, 2020). The notion of the American Shield, once again, points towards the link between nationalism and foreign policy. National sovereignty, raising the domestic guard, solo performance, and advocating for strategic competition were all parts of Trump's "America First" policy that was more or less a break-away from liberal international cooperation. This perspective normalized the United States as a principal defender of its own interests regionally and less reliance on multilateral accord(Hook & Spanier, 2018).

Anyhow, opponents of the strategy pointed out that such policies caused a breakdown of diplomatic relations and an increase in intra-Latin American conflicts. Whereas some considered the strategy as a pretty pragmatic way of dealing with an extremely changing world order and the phenomenal rise of China's global influence (Tokatljan, 2020).

In that case, Donroe's Doctrine can be regarded as a tool for determining what the Trump Administration really wanted as far as re-definition of past American hemispheric control traditions is concerned. It also illustrates how issues like strategic competition, regional dominance, nationalism, and security continue to influence the U.S. policy toward Latin America.

Speaking broadly, the notion of the American Shield confirms that the competition for influence in the Western Hemisphere remains an essential factor in global politics today. The

players, methods, and international conditions may have changed but the overall political objective of maintaining American preeminence in the region still influences the U.S. foreign policy behavior.

2.1.7 Thematic Review

American Shield, Monroe Doctrine Resurgence, Donald Trump's Foreign Policy

Foreign policy of Donald Trump sparked a lot of different people to talk about it: scholars, officials in the government and foreign ones. Since at first glance, it appeared to combine elements of American foreign policy that have always been stable with those who subj changed. Some commentators even went as far as describing Trump's policies as a disconnection from the United States of America historical foreign affairs style, whereas at the same time, others thought that it was only a mere shake-up of the old customs of America nationalism, pursuing one's self-interest vigorously, and dominance over a region.

In his article, Walt (2018) considers the foreign policy of Trump as being mainly based on the idea of putting the country's interests first and concentrating on preserving American power rather than liberal internationalism. In a similar fashion, Mearsheimer (2019) argues that major powers are consistently seeking to maintain their strategic advantages and also aim at preventing their rivals from gaining influence in the areas that they think are crucial to their security.

Trump's foreign policy was never accompanied by an official doctrine called the American Shield; however, the concept actually captures the strategic rationale behind most of his policy choices both domestically and internationally. The American Shield is similar to a defense mechanism through which the U.S. isolates itself and takes extraordinary measures to protect itself against those that it regards as its external threats. These threats are, for instance, illegal immigration, unfair trade practices, foreign technological influence, terrorism, and the rise of the United States' strategic competitors, China and Russia. According to Hook and Spanier

(2018), a long-standing feature of U.S. foreign policy has been the one which demands simultaneously the defense of national security and the aspiration to maintain influence regionally as well as globally. Trump's decisions reflected the continuation of this line of thought as he put a high value on sovereignty, border security, and economic nationalism as his key priorities.

The border wall initiated by Trump was probably the most visible and tangible manifestation of the American Shield. Trump regularly emphasized that illegal immigration posed a risk to the security of the United States, job availability for Americans, and the sovereignty of the nation. In the eyes of the Trump supporters, the implementation of strict border barriers was a legitimate use of state power. On the other hand, the opponents argued that such measures have made the relations between Latin American countries and the US more strained and have harmed the US image internationally (Tokatlian, 2020).

In fact, a border wall was not only a symbol of immigration policy but also a sign of one's being in favor of a protection philosophy, strategic control, and defending national interests against purported external pressures.

The logic behind the American Shield is really highly comparable to the main points of the Monroe Doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine was a statement of policy made by James Monroe in 1823, which declared that the US would consider any foreign interference in the affairs of the Americas as a threat to its security. Brands (2018) regards the doctrine as the foundation of American hemispheric leadership, and also explains that it conveyed the idea that the Western Hemisphere should not be subjected to foreign dominance. Even though the international system is very different from the one that existed in the nineteenth century, some scholars believe that the doctrine's spirit is still present in modern American foreign policy.

A good example of the doctrine's continuation in this century is Trump's response to the rise of China's influence in Latin America. China has over the past twenty years increased its

economic relations with Latin America by means of trade agreements, infrastructure projects, investments in telecommunications, and energy partnerships. According to Ellis (2021), this has not only created opportunities for economic development but also triggered strategic concerns in Washington. The U.S. government started fearing that if Beijing's presence were to increase, it would lead to the United States' gradual loss of supremacy in its own region of influence.

Following this line of thinking, the Trump administration took steps to enhance U.S. influence in the entire hemisphere. Among the methods used were getting closer to the countries of the region, exerting economic pressure, establishing strategic partnerships, and sanctioning those governments that were seen as being very close to China and Russia. The crisis in Venezuela exemplified this policy very clearly. The United States under Trump not only imposed a series of sanctions on Maduro's government but also supported opposition groups and got other countries to pressure the regime. Corrales (2020) argues that besides promoting democracy and human rights, these actions were also driven by geopolitical considerations pertaining to Venezuela's relations with China and Russia.

Realists would say that these actions were hardly anything else than the strategic play to prevent rivals from gaining a foothold in a region which has traditionally been very important for American security. For Mearsheimer (2019), it is in the nature of great powers to try to prevent competitors from gaining significant influence in their regions of interest.

Similarly, according to Walt (2018), major powers see the retention of regional dominance as one of their most important objectives in international politics.

Basically, the American Shield is a 21st-century reinterpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. While the latter sought to exclude European powers from exerting influence in the Western Hemisphere, Trump's approach was to limit the influence of present-day geopolitical rivals, mainly China and Russia. Nye (2021) explains that the alterations in the international

distribution of power have resulted in increased competition among the major countries, thereby raising the importance of the issue of regional influence.

Consequently, Trump's foreign policy clearly signifies that the matters of hemispheric security, persistent strategic competition, and safeguarding national interests continue to be the main movers of American foreign policy in the 21st century.

2.2 Theoretical Review

Realism Theory

Realists believe that states always put their own interests first, so relying on trust, morality, or goodwill alone is impossible in international politics. This paper is a continuation of the work started by Theory of Realism in international relations. Researchers and decision-makers have, for over a century, been using realist perspectives to explain why countries strive to gain power, pursue their national interests, increase their military capabilities, and at times, result in confrontations. Whereas the laws are executed and order guaranteed by the government and legal institutions in the domestic sphere, the international arena is described by realists as anarchic. Thus, anarchy here does not imply complete chaos or disorder but merely means that there is no single worldwide authority strong enough to fully control the actions of sovereign states. Consequently, states prioritize survival, security, military strength, and national interests and give less importance to idealistic goals. It is not that they want to engage in conflict. They are simply afraid of weakness in which case they could be exploited. To most statesmen, their talk about justice, democracy or peace is a mere veil, hiding their true motives that is to gain advantage and ensure survival. Therefore, Morgenthau argued that the national interest would be the dominant element in foreign relations rather than moral aspiration. He was placing American national interest regularly over the broader international commitments. His administration distrusted alliance structures, criticized international organizations, slapped

tariffs on trading partners, and he even preferred unilateral action whenever American interests seemed to be under threat.

The "America First" rationale was nothing but an expression of strong realist assumptions. Through this realist viewpoint, one can best explain Trump's policies in Latin America. According to realist theory, great powers will oppose the entry of their rivals in regions that they consider strategically important. Historically, the US has claimed the Western Hemisphere as its traditional sphere of influence, particularly after the announcement of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. From a realist point of view, America interpreted the growing influence of China and Russia in Latin America as threatening their strategic position. Besides, Russia is strengthening diplomatic and military relations with countries such as Venezuela which is a socialist regime. So, to many US strategists, these moves by Russia and China are a cause of concern since it appears that America's geopolitical neighborhood is turning into a safe haven for their rivals. Trump's decision not only was consistent with the realist narrative but also reflected his government's view of levying sanctions, increasing diplomatic pressure, strengthening regional ties, and using tougher language against those administrations that were seen as being aligned with geopolitical rivals. The objective was not just ideological but strategic.

Imagine a landlord who has been in control of the neighborhood for a long time. All of a sudden, powerful new neighbors start buying properties in the area and are most likely planning new developments for the neighborhood. Even if they seem friendly at first, the landlord might still worry about losing his authority or control of the environment. In a similar way, States in their international relations sometimes show these behaviors. It is only natural for safety to lead to vigilance, influence to lead to rivalry, and power to lead to competition.

Neorealism (Structural Realism)

Neorealism or Structural Realism is yet another significant branch of realisms that has a bearing on this study.

Classical realism has a strong proclivity for human nature and leadership pattern, while neorealism is more inclined towards to the structure of international system itself. Waltz believed that the main reason why states act competitively is not because the leaders are aggressive as human beings but rather because the structure of the international system forces them to seek self-protection in a situation characterized by anarchy. To put it simply, powerful states that maintain peace may still take a defensive position once they notice a change in the balance of power, and this reasoning can largely be used to understand the U.S. response to China's rise to global influence. As China's economic, technological, and political power spread globally, the U.S. began perceiving Beijing as a competitor on the strategic level that could challenge U.S. supremacy. The Chinese Government's investments in infrastructure, mining, telecommunications, and energy in Latin America have been seen by many US officials not merely as economic cooperation but also as the establishment of a Chinese presence in the region. According to a neorealist framework, Washington's refusal to accept these developments was its defensive reaction against a regional power shift that endangered the existing order. Recently, Latin America has become something more than a local interest. It has become a battleground for the grand geopolitical rivalry between great powers.

Hegemonic Stability Theory

Hegemonic Stability Theory argues that a dominant power or hegemon, which is militarily, economically, and politically strong enough to structure the rules and discipline challengers of the system, often maintains international order and stability. However, realism alone cannot fully explain the scenario that this paper investigates. Hegemonic Stability Theory is another view which may justify what this paper argues. According to this theory, it is easier to maintain

the stability of a region or even the whole international system when one dominant state takes the lead. Usually, the hegemon provides:

- Security • Economic • Trade • Diplomatic • Institutional leadership

In fact, US has been the main hegemon in the Western Hemisphere for a major part of the recent history. Washington could rely on the cooperation of the majority of Latin American countries for decades by using American military power, economic strength, diplomatic influence, and institutional leadership. The influence of the U.S. was demonstrated in the following ways:

Financial institutions Trade agreements Security cooperation Political alliances Cultural influence Diplomatic pressure

Through this control, the US managed to steer many regional political and economic affairs to conform to its strategic interests. However, it is not a rare phenomenon for the hegemonic powers to get uneasy when their rivals gain foothold in the geopolitically areas they considered as their spheres of dominance. This feeling of uneasiness has explained Trump's foreign policy to a great extent and especially how his administration feared that the spreading Chinese and Russian influence could slowly erode America's traditional leadership position in Latin America. Venezuelan, Cuban, immigration control, trade protectionism, and regional diplomacy policies all reflected broader efforts to preserve U.S. hegemony within the hemisphere. From this perspective, Trump's foreign policy mission can be seen as a way of safeguarding America's prevailing dominant position against the emergence of geopolitical competitors. They were parts of a broad strategic effort to maintain the U.S. influence, leadership in the region, and to deny rival powers from solidifying a presence close to the United States.

Hegemonic Stability Theory helps us understand why the US is so anxious about China's economic rise, Chinese economic growth is mostly commercial, whereas a large part of military expansion is through economic means.

Actually, great powers are primarily concerned about influence.

However, economic relations may give rise to political influence, and political influence may result in strategic leverage.

Furthermore, strategic leverage can, over a period of time, impact regional power balances.

That thought process was behind many American worries during the Trump administration.

American foreign policy under Trump can be seen highly to a large degree to be based on two, or at least one of the, quite different schools of thought, realism and hegemonic stability theory, since they highlight the main themes of the paper, such as power competition, national interest, strategic rivalry, regional dominance, security concerns, and geopolitical influence.

Also, these theories provide a perspective of Trump's approach to the United States and Latin America as not just a neighboring region but a major strategic area in the global struggle for influence among the great powers.

2.3 Empirical Review

Brands (2018) examined the geopolitical perspective of the Trump administration toward Latin America.

The author only examined secondary data as it is verbally expressed in the paper, so we may infer that the methodology is qualitative policy analysis.

It studied how the role of nationalism and strategic rivalry shaped the American foreign policy under the "America First" slogan.

The study revealed that the Trump administration increasingly understood

Latin America through the prism of geopolitical competition, especially given the rise of China and Russia's influence in the Western Hemisphere.

The author maintained that Trump's policies had a renewed hemispheric strategic notion in the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine's historical rationale.

Long (2020) delved into Trump's foreign policy intentions toward Latin America through diplomatic comparative analysis.

The study followed how migration control, border security, and the anti-socialist narrative were instrumental in forming the U.S. regional policy trilogy.

The main image of Latin America in the paper was as the 'source of threats' rather than 'partner for regional integration.' The suggestion was that the Trump White House preferred strategic defense to multilateral diplomacy.

Hakim (2019) carried out a study on hemispheric relations in the Trump administration.

The author relied on policy evaluation methods at first glance to check the evolution of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Latin American countries.

Findings led to the conclusion that the administration's aggressive rhetoric has caused deterioration in trust and relations in some parts of the region, however, increased America's unilateralism.

The author pointed out that nationalism did a lot in changing relations between the U.S. and Latin America.

Goldsworthy (2020) conducted a research on the military aspects of the Roman Empire by qualitative historical analysis.

The paper highlights military organization, discipline, strategic expansion, and administrative coordination as factors leading to Roman imperial dominance.

Results revealed that the Roman military was not only a fighting force but also a vehicle for political control and territorial integration.

According to the paper, the military might of Rome was the most potent support of its imperial power and long-term expansion.

Beard (2018) worked on bringing out the political authority and governance structure of the Roman Empire.

The paper employs historical institutional analysis to demonstrate the means by which Roman political institutions were instrumental in empire consolidation.

He illustrated that reforms in administration, extending citizenship, setting up legal system, and provincial governance all contributed to visibly securing the empire's legitimacy and enabled efficient governance of diverse populations.

The author drew a conclusion emphasizing that political flexibility and organization were the key factors in the enduring rule of the Roman Empire.

Ikenberry (2020) did a study on what supported America's global supremacy after World War II.

Referring to qualitative international political analysis, the article demonstrated how the United States successfully projected its global influence through military alliances; economic institutions; diplomatic leadership; and liberal international institutions such as NATO, the IMF, and the World Bank.

It is proposed that American hegemony post-1945 was not based on military power alone but also on institutional leadership and economic integration.

Nye (2021) conducted an investigation on the means by which the United States retained global influence between 1945 and 1991 through analysis of foreign policy and soft power.

This study has established that during the Cold War, the U.S. not only led the world militarily but also through technological development, economic strength, culture, and pro-American ideology.

At present, American media, diplomacy, education, and technology still support America's global position more than direct military force.

The author of this paper considers soft power along with other powers as a primary tool that elevated American hegemony in the Cold War period.

2.4 Gap in Literature

Despite the recent surge in literature focusing on topics such as Donald Trump's foreign policy, the Monroe Doctrine and United States, Latin American relations, there still exist numerous gaps in the research on these subjects.

The scattered sources that are practically the only ones covering these specific topics end up presenting very shallow pictures. For example, most articles are highly focused on immigration policy issues, trade conflict with China, Venezuela sanctions, and diplomatic relations with Cuba without really explaining how all these policies combined in the reflection of a broader American strategic objective.

As a result, the authors have hardly ever revealed the interconnectedness and unity of Trump's foreign policy toward Latin America as a part of the Western Hemisphere.

Another major gap in the literature is also the lack of research on the Monroe Doctrine itself. Most of the papers in this field focus on the University of Pennsylvania's experience and discussions about the Monroe Doctrine initiative by President James Monroe, its work through the European colonial rivalry, or its function in the Cold War period (Perkins, 1963). Certainly, these historical descriptions are the most appropriate but there are almost none that shed light on the revival of the Monroe Doctrine principles in the current geostrategic competition, and especially during Trump's presidency. This is a highly important point when considering the U.S. position against the growing impact of China and Russia in Latin America. Although some authors make a reference to the U.S.'s dread of foreign influence in the hemisphere, hardly any studies draw a direct line between Trump's decisions and the hemispheric dominance aspect of the Monroe Doctrine (Smith, 2005).

Quite a few scholars separate Trump's nationalist statements entirely from his foreign policy moves. Frequently his border security, economic populism, immigration control, and "America First" discourse are seen as domestic political talk instead of being a part of a larger

geopolitical context. Nevertheless, Trump's claims about defending American sovereignty and resisting foreign intervention were simultaneously backed up by the actions to maintain U.S. preeminence in the Western Hemisphere.

It is little known that the communication and strategic aspects of the former could both be mutually influencing in the context of his foreign policy (Zelikow 2017).

This study intends to address the missing issues in the literature by presenting the Monroe Doctrine as the first strategic idea that underlined Trump's foreign policy towards the Western Hemisphere and Latin America to a greater extent.

Besides, the study highlights the links between nationalism, hemispheric dominance, migration policies, and geopolitical rivalry in Trump's strategies.

This is in addition to, the fact that Latin American countries are viewed as international players and not simply the passive targets of US policy. To sum up, the paper argues that although there are changes in global actors and political language, the battle for influence in the Western Hemisphere remains a very important element of America's foreign policy.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This work is based on the Realist Theory which Hans Morgenthau first formulated in 1948. It mainly sees global issues through the perspective of power, national interest, security, and competition among states (Morgenthau, 1948). Realism holds that the international system is anarchic, meaning it lacks a central authority that can control the actions of states entirely. So, states mainly depend on their own power for their survival and protection. As a result, there is an incessant competition among states for exerting their influence, power and securing their strategic positions in the global system (Waltz, 1979).

Hans Morgenthau remains one of the most dominant figures in the realist tradition. His work *Politics Among Nations*, has been the basis of Classical Realism. Here, he argued that international relations are governed by laws that are rooted in human nature, and that leaders think and act in terms of interests that correspond to power. According to Morgenthau, states take actions that are aimed at both protecting and promoting their national interests.

Another top realist, Kenneth Waltz came up with the Structural Realism or Neorealism theory. According to him, the structure of the international system compels states' behavior. Therefore, states cannot escape competing and balancing power in this self-help system. Similarly, John Mearsheimer, through his Offensive Realism viewpoint, argues that great powers are always trying to get as much power as possible and to dominate their regions so that they can hardly be threatened by other states (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Realism is a perfect theory with which to carry out the current research as it explains the strategy of the United States towards Latin America particularly under the Trump administration. Besides, this theory can also justify the fact that the United States wants to be the only dominant power in the Western Hemisphere and to resist the presence of others such as China.

Assumptions of the Theory

Power struggle, survival, and strategic supremacy are the three main components on which realist theory is based. This paper through the realist theory lens, reconsiders Donroe's Doctrine of an American hemisphere sphere of influence. Only on the assumption that international politics is a power struggle, survival and strategic dominance of states, we can understand the need of one state in dominating others in international relations. For this reason, powerful states aim to establish and maintain influence in particular regions as a way of protecting their national interests. Donroe's Doctrine which stresses the importance of America maintaining dominance in the Western.

Hemisphere is a reflection of the realist perspective.

Realism further claims that since states live in an anarchic, international system without a central authority to ensure security, they are locked in a state of continuous competition and distrust. In the context of the present paper, this interpretation is the reason why U.S. perceives China's growing influence as a threat. Donroe's Doctrine considers such competition as a threat to American hegemony in the hemisphere which causes the United States to reassert control and limit the interference of outsiders.

The theory also bases its argument on the fact that the main reasons behind foreign policies are in most cases strategic and security interests while moral or ideological considerations are given lesser importance. Therefore, as the states take rational decisions to defend their sphere of influence, counter the rise of rival powers and maintain regional supremacy, it is seen in the very frequent moves that the United States makes to keep its leadership in Latin America which is, after all, the politics of hemispheric sphere of influence. That is why, the realist theory can be used to analyze Donroe's Doctrine as one of the signs of the geopolitical battle for dominance in the hemisphere.

Application of the Theory to the Study

This particular theory is logically connected with the study because it explains the strategic behavior of a country in international politics. This theoretical outlook has enabled me to examine the geopolitics of the Donroe's Doctrine that situate the U.S. towards Latin America. It explicates why the Washington-led administrations have consistently targeted the Western Hemisphere with policies that open the label of Monroe Doctrine and to their overall influence at the hemispheric level. From a realist point of view, U.S. foreign policy in Latin America is mainly motivated by considerations of national interest, security and the desire to retain influence in the region.

It also gives us the frame to grasp the despair of the U.S. over the increasing economic engagement and the long-term intentions of the Beijing government in the region with the features of power transition and shift of hegemony through the use of different instruments of power including diplomacy, politics, and military that will eventually lead to changes in balance of power. A lot of U.S. concern comes from the involvement of China in massive infrastructure which is both problematic and damaging to U.S. hegemony.

Besides setting the confrontation between the U.S. and China at the regional level in the framework of power relations, realism justifies major states' reactions when rivals appear unexpectedly in other strategic territories. To put it simply, the U.S. rejection of China's increasing footprint in the Western Hemisphere is consistent with the usual realist concern over competition for power, and pursuit of regional dominance.

Therefore, Realist Theory constitutes the intellectual framework to explain Trump's foreign policy as a component of America's broader strategy to protect its hemispheric influence and maintain paramount strategic advantages within Latin America.

3.2 Research Design

Research design may be defined as the systematic way in which research is undertaken, like a strategy for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. In this research, descriptive design was used as main research method because it just studies and describes Trump's foreign policy without changing or experimenting with any factors. Descriptive research is very useful when it comes to dismantling, understanding and explaining political events, diplomatic tactics and international relations in a step-by-step, logical way.

The study also used qualitative research which basically means a deeper investigation of a political phenomenon by analyzing speeches, policy documents, historical events and diplomatic actions. To gain a better understanding of the changes in American hemispheric policy from 1823 to the present day, historical analysis was also adopted. These views justify realism theory in that US strategy is to maintain its hegemony in the Western Hemisphere and keep other powers like China at bay by controlling their influence in the region.

The main reason for selecting a descriptive qualitative research design is that the biggest portion of the study relies heavily on documentary and secondary sources such as books, journals, official reports and credible online materials among others. Yet, in spite of the recognized drawbacks of such secondary data sources, it was possible to maintain the levels of reliability and validity since the study was based on stringent selection and group comparison of authoritative sources.

3.3 Method of Data Collection

For this research secondary sources were the main data collection tool. Secondary data are essentially re-used results that researchers, organizations or institutions have previously collected, processed and published for their academic or official needs. The choice of secondary sources was due to the fact that the study concerns foreign policy analysis, hemispheric influence, geopolitical rivalry and international relations where one has to

extensively consult documents, scholarly interpretations and policy papers spanning a very long time period.

The text materials were derived from a mixed combination of: textbooks, academic journals, scholarly articles, government publications, official speeches, policy reports, newspapers and authoritative online websites related to American foreign policy, the Monroe Doctrine, realism, Latin America, and the administration of Donald Trump. Besides these, materials from international organizations, foreign policy think tanks, and research institutions were also consulted in order to obtain balanced and comprehensive information concerning U.S., China rivalry and hemispheric politics.

The choice of secondary sources was nevertheless consistent with the aim of the study which was historical and analytical inquiry as opposed to field survey or experimental research. Notwithstanding, the researcher in no way compromised on sources' credibility and authoritativeness so as to assure the study's reliability and validity. The use of information from these different sources was also meant to mitigate bias and bring about more accurate conclusions.

3.4 Research Hypotheses

1. Trump's American Shield policy significantly reinforced the Monroe Doctrine in the Western Hemisphere.
2. Trump administration's policies toward Venezuela significantly reduced Chinese Hemispheric influence in Latin America.

3.5 Method of Data Analysis

One of the main techniques of data analysis employed in the research was qualitative methods, mainly descriptive and content analysis. Qualitative research emphasizes the illumination, elucidation, and understanding of changeable features rather than mere numerical summary.

The use of description allowed the orderly assessment and interpretation of different interrelated aspects such as political developments, foreign policy initiatives, and geopolitical trends. It was closely associated with American hemispheric influence and Trump's foreign policy towards Latin America.

Content analysis was directed to a large number and variety of documents including speeches, policy papers, research articles, government reports, diplomatic communications, and historical records relevant to the topic. The technique has been instrumental in establishing the link between the key elements such as realism, the Monroe Doctrine, U.S. foreign policy and the presence of Chinese influence in Latin America.

The choice of this technique is defensible since the investigation is largely centered on polity, strategic competition, and foreign policy interpretation of the international system. Moreover, qualitative descriptive method was in line with the realist theory framework in that it gave the researcher a very effective means to study in greater depth the endeavors of the United States which, on the one hand, sought to retain its strategic preponderance and, on the other, to repress the emergence of other powers within the Western Hemisphere.

Afterwards, the data, which was collected from various sources, was systematically ordered and interpreted in line with the aims and hypotheses of the research. Therefore, the study was able to come to reasoned conclusions about the association between Trump's foreign policy and the politics of the hemispheric sphere of influence.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of the data gathered for the paper entitled Politics of Hemispheric Sphere of Influence: A Reappraisal from the Lenses of MONROE'S Doctrine. Here, the latest U.S foreign policy especially under President Donald Trump is examined from the perspective of a resuscitated Monroe Doctrine in the Western Hemisphere. For many years, Latin America has been the theater where international powers battle and struggle for political, economic, and security influence. Historically, the U.S. has always considered the region as its very own sphere of influence. However, recently, the significant expansion of China in Latin America has brought about power rebalancing. China's investments, infrastructure projects, oil contracts, and diplomatic collaborations have increased very quickly in countries like Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, and Argentina.

In some way, the return of Trump to the presidency has resulted in the US adopting a more direct and forceful foreign policy for the region. His administration's "American Shield" strategy attracted both academic and policy analysts who mostly saw it as a move to reinstall American hegemony in the hemisphere. Indeed, the motive behind it very much coincided with the Monroe Doctrine's old argument that external powers should not acquire strategic control in the Americas.

Towards this end, this chapter seeks to test the following hypotheses:

1. Trump's America Shield policy significantly reinforced the Monroe Doctrine in the Western Hemisphere.
2. The Trump administration policies toward Venezuela significantly reduced Chinese hemispheric influence in Latin America.

The Opinions from scholars, policy analysis, and geopolitical developments have been combined to demonstrate the growing similarity of the American foreign policy of the moment to the Monroe Doctrine and also how the politics of the hemispheres is being affected.

4.1 Hypothesis One

Trump's American Shield policy considerably strengthened the Monroe Doctrine in the Western Hemisphere.

In fact, the Monroe Doctrine forms the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy to this day for many people. It was during a talk by President James Monroe in 1823 that the doctrine was unveiled. Essentially, it was advising the European powers that any political interference and colonization inside the western hemisphere would not be tolerated. At first, the doctrine was simply a defensive stance to ensure that the newly independent Latin American states were protected against European intervention. However, over the course of time, it has been the tool for US intervention, dominance, and control in Latin America (Crandall, 2019). The Monroe Doctrine over the years has been a clear demonstration that the Western Hemisphere is the US sphere of influence. One after another American administrations have invoked the doctrine to justify American control in the region and exclude other foreign powers. For example, during the Cold War, the US vehemently opposed Cuban and Nicaraguan communist regimes supported by the Soviet Union because it was one of the challenges to the American control of the hemisphere (Gaddis, 2018).

Trump was the one who re-familiarized many of us with this old geopolitical ideology. The scenario, however, had changed quite a bit since there was the globalization factor and China as the new strategic rival. So, it was no longer only about European colonial powers. Trump was more interested in preventing China and Russia from establishing a presence in Latin America. This was, in a sense, the immediate application of the Monroe Doctrine's main concept of not allowing rival powers to set up strategic presence in the Western Hemisphere

(Brands, 2018). It was almost a defining trait of Trump's foreign policy that Latin America is U.S. influence just as a backyard of the house. His administration repeatedly pointed out how China is investing in ports, telecommunications, transportation infrastructures, mines, energy sectors throughout Latin America. South America is said to be one of China's largest trading partners in its industry sectors. Moreover, it is carrying out most of the infrastructure financing in Latin America during the Trump administrations (Council on Foreign Relations). U.S. officials have been concerned that this would lead to significant weakening of U.S. political influence if China's economic and social impacts continued to grow.

The "American Shield" policy was derived in the context of a competitive geopolitical environment. It was a policy not directly asking for a formal Monroe Doctrine revival. However, the policy was very clear in subtly invoking the precepts that justify the exclusion of another hemisphere power and U.S. dominance in the hemisphere. The policy emphasized:

Immigration control, Boundary Security, Economic protectionism, Sanctions, Military cooperation with regional allies and Resistance to Chinese influence in Latin America

Altogether these can be considered as the evidence of the desire to keep the U.S. as the dominant force in the Western Hemisphere.

For some scholars, Trump's move reminded them of the Monroe Doctrine, only that it was updated to fit present times. Some authors called it "Monroe Doctrine 2.0, " while others pushed the analogy even further, calling it the "Trump Corollary" because of its harsh stance on the powers vying for influence in Latin America (Tokatlian, 2020).

The main point of the policy remained the same: the U.S. would stand against the expansion of foreign powers it deems a threat to the U.S. strategic interests in the region. The administration's rhetoric also reflected that attitude.

Repeatedly, Trump slammed China's emergence in Latin America as a threat to not only U.S. security but also its economic interests. Their concern was mainly on China's penetration of strategic facilities such as ports, telecoms, energy, and transport corridors.

United States officials feared that China's

technological and economic progress might eventually help China increase its political influence near the US (Ellis, 2021).

One of the focal points of this concern was the Panama Canal and the broad maritime infrastructure in Central America. Officials from the US raised their concerns about enterprises associated with China being close to essential shipping lanes.

The administration argued that allowing Chinese firms to operate key infrastructure could marginalize the US's role and, from a security perspective, it could expose vulnerabilities not just in the hemisphere but also in those areas that are directly adjacent to the US.

Similarly, Trump's tough approach to Venezuela was a powerful indication of his loyalty to the Monroe Doctrine. Plus, Venezuela's economic and foreign policy were so tightly linked to China and Russia, that in some sense these two countries were providing it loans, equipment and military assistance.

Reports claim that China has invested billions of dollars in Venezuela's oil and other infrastructures and that these efforts have been supported by the Russian military and diplomatic engagements (Corrales, 2020).

The Trump administration's most severe move against Venezuela was to impose extensive economic sanctions, isolate the country from the international community, and openly support the opposition to Nicolás Maduro's government.

These measures were, in fact, grounded in the defense of democracy and human rights; however, in some ways, Moscow's geopolitical calculation to continue the US and other powers competition in Latin America may have also had an impact.

Moreover, the administration took Cuba to the forefront as a pillar of its return to aggressive tactics by undoing many of the diplomatic Obama-era moves.

Most of the restrictions on travel, trade, and diplomatic engagement that had been lifted were reinstated along with new measures. The consistent depiction of Cuba as one of the members of the hemisphere's anti-American faction was maintained (Long, 2020).

These also included the ideological and strategic efforts at control in Latin America, which were supported by the Cuban initiatives.

Senior American officials made statements that clearly reflected that the U.S. was thinking from the perspective of a hemisphere. For example, a former U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, when expressing the US determination, stated that the US would never allow the Western hemisphere to become a "base of operation for adversaries and rivals."

This kind of thinking reflects the strategic foundation of the Monroe Doctrine, most importantly the idea that unlike foreign powers, the US should not be constrained by significant influence even in proximity to the American territory.

Opponents of Trump's actions argue that the American Shield notion only raised the singular, gigantic importance of national security and the counteraction of China's expansion through both economic and military diplomacy.

The problem, from another perspective, is that the US would have Chinese investments in Latin America, which would make the region in a state of economic dependency and, eventually, the US would lose its role as the dominant power.

Therefore, greater US involvement was seen as protective rather than imperialistic.

On the contrary, many LA experts and political analysts have expressed that Trump's approach resembled the revival of US patterns of interventions and hegemonic control in the hemisphere. They considered such policy measures as the continuation of historic US efforts to use the protection of security as a guise for dominating the political and economic affairs of the region.

However, the basis for Trump policy according to this study, is that among other things, the American Shield policy greatly intensified and reinforced the Monroe Doctrine in the Western Hemisphere.

Perhaps it can be said that 'policy' here means a strategy designed and executed in a modern geopolitical space heavily influenced by globalization, technological competition, and the U.S.-China rivalry, mainly aimed at maintaining U.S. lead in the hemisphere and resisting the expansion of the foreign powers seen as rivals in Latin America, which is in accord with the long-standing traditions of U.S. strategic thought.

Moreover, the reality is that the present-day international environment is vastly different from that of the 19th century, yet the fundamental logic of controlling the hemisphere keeps on heavily dictating the foreign policies of the U.S.

Here and there, phrases may be formed differently, a change of actors may occur, economic and diplomatic instruments rather than military ones could be used on a large scale, but in the grand scheme, the battle for regional dominance is certainly one of the key features of international politics.

4.2 Hypothesis Two

The policies enacted by the Trump administration in Venezuela deeply curtailed China's ability to wield influence in Latin America.

Venezuela was a major venue of geopolitical rivalry

How to:

Trump administration's policies toward Venezuela greatly limited Chinese influence in the Latin America. The biggest Venezuela-front in the US-China geopolitical competition

These last two decades, it's no secret China has developed the economic, political, and even strategic ties with Venezuela through the leaders of the country, the late Hugo Chavez and Mr. Nicolas Maduro.

Besides the oil sector, Chinese involvement even extended to infrastructure development, mining, transportation, telecommunications, and military cooperation.

China is not only among Venezuela's biggest lenders but also its closest strategic ally in Latin America, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. Chinese policy banks have been reported to have issued the most loans to Venezuela of any country in Latin America, with billions of dollars invested through oil-backed agreements and infrastructure financing alone. By 2025, Chinese loans and investments in Venezuela amounted to tens of billions of dollars, making Caracas one of Beijing's key geopolitical partners in the Western Hemisphere. (Council on Foreign Relations)

The growing partnership in the eyes of the Trump administration was far more than just trade cooperation. Washington was starting to see Chinese influence in Venezuela as a direct threat to the long-standing dominance of the US in Latin America. Venezuela, far from being a mere domestic political issue for the US, was part of the broader US-China geopolitical rivalry in the hemisphere.

On the other hand, the Trump administration went to the extremes by taking forceful diplomatic measures against Venezuela using sanctions, diplomatic isolation, economic restrictions, and political pressure tools. Officially, these moves were justified by the administration on the basis of concern about the state of democracy, corruption, human rights violations, and electoral fraud in the Nicolás Maduro government. But critics have pointed out that the American policy decisions were ultimately the result of a global geopolitical factors combined.

International policy organizations and security experts agree that the United States was trying to use its Venezuela policy as a means to counter Chinese proliferation in Latin America. Since China's presence in Venezuela is closely linked to the Maduro government, changing or

weakening the situation of the Venezuelan government is seen by analysts as one of the most important ways to weaken China's position in hemispheric geopolitics. (guinnessgi.com)

Here are three main reasons why Venezuela's geopolitical role is very important:-

- Its enormous oil production capacity
- The alignment with China and Russia
- Being the symbol of anti-American politics in the region

Thanks to its energy reserves which are among the largest in the world, Venezuela has become an important player in the global energy market. Chinese state firms have over the years invested capital in the oil sector and infrastructure of the country. In another way, China also plays a major role in the consumption of Venezuelan oil by way of debt repayment (USCC).

The Trump administration, therefore, viewed Venezuela as an issue related not only to geopolitics but also to energy security. Sanctions were imposed on Venezuela's oil industry, financial sector, and government entities in order to weaken the Maduro regime and also challenge China's strategic foothold in the country.

However, with America imposing the petroleum embargo, the economic conditions were deteriorated for Venezuela. Production of petroleum was severely affected, obtaining financing became intermittent and more complicated, while the country's access to external markets was significantly curtailed. Besides, Chinese firms engaging with the Venezuelan economy faced an increasingly difficult environment in terms of the security of their investments, the structure of their repayments, and even their long-term contracts. Indeed, it is noted that Beijing's willingness to engage in solid strategic commitments in the country has been declining. (Wikipedia)

The tension peaked in January 2026 when the U.S. carried out a precision strike against Maduro, which, at once, escalated the geopolitical tensions involving Venezuela. Apparently, Chinese officials were so worried about the scenario that their strongest alliance in Latin America might

disappear if Venezuela fell in line with Washington under American pressure, this was what triggered the situation. (The Guardian)

Typically this is how the international relations game goes on with big powers hardly facing each other directly with open conflict; instead, they use regions, alliances, proxy communities, and strategic influence in their competitions. Thus, Venezuela turned out to be one of the main game-changers of the wider U.S., China contest over control of the hemisphere.

After the intervention of U.S., the once well-functioning Chinese strategic presence in Venezuela has been destabilized. Extracts from various reports indicate that as a result of their fear of tighter U.S. restrictions as well as the overall increased geopolitical tension caused by the U.S.-China rivalry in the region, Latin American Chinese enterprises are undergoing a greater level of prudence. (CKGSB)

Simultaneously, Washington was also looking to employ energy geopolitics in the area as a lever of American strategic interests. Remember analysts were saying that Trump's Venezuela strategy was primarily directed to the energetic reshaping of the Western Hemisphere under the US and its allies' dominant role, with the far less involvement by external players like China. (PIIE)

Geopolitically, this had huge ramifications. For instance, if Venezuela, China's most strategically important partner in Latin America, were to become less dependent on Beijing, then arguably, China's influence in the entire region could decline. Therefore, on the one hand, Trump administration considered Venezuela as a national security issue, on the other hand, it was a very crucial venue for sustaining American dominance over the hemisphere. Nevertheless, the issue was highly intricate and definitely not a case of a single winner. Many experts cautioned that too much was not to be ascribed to the US decisions.

China stayed a very significant trade and investment partner for Latin American nations like Brazil, Peru, Chile, and Argentina. This was the case in spite of the US attempts to restrict their

cooperation. So, the Chinese economic footprint in Latin America is still there but it is adapting to the changing geopolitics (Council on Foreign Relations).

One could even say, if taken to the extreme, it is possible that American tactics could really see those governments which have not traditionally been close to China, going near to China as a means to counterbalance US dominance and interventionism. Some even went as far as to say that sanctions, pressure and unilateral actions are the sort of policy U.S. that might raise the specter of the U.S hegemony in the Western hemisphere again. (The Washington Post).

On the other hand, the reality is that the policies of Trump's administration concerning Venezuela probably caught the strategic Chinese confidence off guard and limited Beijing's ability to maneuver politically within one of the most significant partners of the region. (The Washington Post)

Because of the unstable security environment, Chinese officials started to worry more and more about their investments, alliances, and geopolitical influence in Venezuela.

This is why the evidence supports the viewpoint that the Trump administration's policies toward Venezuela had a significant role in curbing China's influence in the Western Hemisphere, particularly in the Venezuelan geopolitical sphere. China remains a leading actor there but it is evident that the Trump administration's policies have not only stalled China's rising influence but also bolstered the United States' efforts to maintain its dominance within its traditional spheres of influence.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter sums up the essential findings of the study and outlines the author's conclusions, based on the analysis, as well as his/her ideas for further actions, in light of the results. The study was centered on the politics of hemispheric sphere of influence through the mandates of Monroe's Doctrine, mainly focusing on the US foreign policy under the administration of Donald Trump and the broader competition for influence within Latin America between US and China. The study especially emphasized the revival of the Monroe Doctrine by Trump's "American Shield" strategy and the geopolitical impact of US policies towards Venezuela. Whereas previous chapters established the historical, conceptual, theoretical, and empirical bases for the study, Chapter Four presented the hypothesis testing and discussion of the findings.

5.1 Summary The study mainly traced back the roots of the US hemispheric

dominance in Latin America. It was first of all established in Chapter One that the 1823 Monroe Doctrine was the single main factor for the United States strategically dominating the Western Hemisphere. Originally the Doctrine was a European policy intervention in the Americas; however, it has in many ways evolved and become the means through which the United States, in political, economic, and military ways, dominate Latin America. Also, from the analysis, it is evident that the emergence of China as a global economic and geopolitical power has significantly altered the strategic balance in Latin America. Heavy Chinese investments in the infrastructure, mining, telecommunications, energy, and trade sectors of Latin America, especially in Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina and Peru, have caused concern in Washington as it appears that American decision-makers increasingly see China's rise as a direct challenge to the long-standing US dominance in the region. In Chapter Two, the study expounded the key terms foreign policy, Monroe Doctrine, hemispheric influence, hegemony, and Donroe's Doctrine. The chapter argued that Trump's foreign policy was a blend of nationalism, strategic rivalry, and a revived sense of hemispheric consciousness. Donroe's Doctrine was employed in the research as a means to highlight that Trump's foreign policy was essentially a contemporary incarnation of the principles of the Monroe Doctrine in the international politics of today. Besides, the chapter interpreted the general idea that the "American Shield" is a defensive geopolitical concept aiming to protect American interests from external influences and threats. The research argued that Trump's administration did not view immigration, border security, Chinese investment, and regional instability issues as isolated in vivo policy measures only; rather, each of them was deemed to be the-linked threats to the strategic American influence in the Western Hemisphere. The research theoretical framework was most directly and strongly influenced by Realist Theory. Realism was the principal tool for the unraveling of the reasoning behind competition among states, securing of strategic interests, resistance to rivals in geopolitically significant regions. In explaining American policy towards Latin

America, the study drew on the realist theories of Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer. Realism was considered a proper selection as it demonstrates the survival, dominance, and regional control strategies of powerful states in the anarchic international system. On the research methodology side, a descriptive qualitative research design was adopted and the data obtained mainly from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, official government publications, policy reports, speeches, and internet materials. The documentary analysis was the method used for examining the data collected for the research. Chapter Four, the key chapter, tested the two hypotheses made for the research. The first hypothesis questioned whether Trump's American Shield policy has to a large extent strengthened the Monroe Doctrine in the Western Hemisphere. The experimental results illustrated that Trump's foreign policy closely mirrored the long-standing principles of the Monroe Doctrine, particularly in the endeavors to limit foreign intervention, maintain American dominance, and counter China's growing presence in the region. Enactment of sanctions, immigration restrictions, diplomatic pressure, and strategic engagement visa policies left in different parts of Latin America showed the historiographic continuity of the American hemispheric strategies of the past. The second hypothesis was about the impact of Trump's Venezuela policies on the decline of Chinese influence in the hemisphere. It was discovered that China's long-term influence was remotely affected through the combined use of sanctions and diplomatic pressures on the Venezuelan territory that upset China's confidence in the region. Despite the American diplomatic and economic pressure, the study also found that China maintains significant economic interdependence with some Latin American countries. The findings, therefore, showed that while Trump's moves have indeed weakened some aspects of Chinese influence in Venezuela, they have not completely eliminated China's presence and influence throughout Latin America. Overall, the study pointed out that the dispute over hemispheric influence continues to be a major feature of today's international

politics. The geopolitical and even social world has changed drastically since 19th century; however, American interest and largely the pursuit of the objective of strategic dominance in the Western Hemisphere drives the US foreign policy behavior even to this day.

5.2 Conclusion

This work has demonstrated that quite a bit of the US foreign policy during Donald Trump's presidency was an attempt to revive the strategic thought and practices historically associated with the Monroe Doctrine. Despite working in a totally different international environment of globalization, economic interdependence, and technological competition, several Trump administration's policies towards Latin America indicated continuities with earlier American efforts to maintain hemispheric dominance and to exclude others from influencing the Western Hemisphere. Furthermore, the entire paper maintains that Trump's American Shield was a foreign policy strategy that went beyond mere policy readjustment but rather it is a broader geographical orientation based on nationalism, border control, strategic rivalry, economic protectionism, and resistance to/Chinese and Russia's influence in Latin America. The U.S. administration took several steps such as sanctions, diplomatic pressure, immigration restrictions, and regional engagements to keep America's strategic control in the hemisphere. This paper also infers that China's increasing economic, political, and cultural presence in Latin America is one of the chief elements that have contributed to the transformation of the geopolitical landscape of the Western Hemisphere. By providing Latin American governments with new opportunities that fixing infrastructure, financing, and trade partnerships in China, etc., the Chinese exerted a new force in the region that challenged the longstanding America's dominance. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that Latin America gradually has become a battlefield where major powers have been waging strategic competition. Besides these, the findings of the study highlighted that Venezuela remains one of the epicenters of this strategic rivalry. Apart from concerns with democracy and political

instability, the United States' Venezuelan policy was also largely informed by strategic interests such as oil resources, influence in regional affairs, and curb of China's expansionist tendencies in the hemisphere. Hence, the research has, to a great extent, confirmed the fact that American foreign policy in Latin America, especially during the post-Cold War period, is still grounded predominantly on realist concepts of power, security, strategic competition, and regional dominance. In spite of the varying styles of leadership and diplomatic techniques employed by different administrations, the core focus on the issue of sustaining American dominance in the Western Hemisphere has by and large been unchanged. Finally, the study proves that the 21st-century hemispheric politics is being shaped to a large degree by the geopolitical rivalry among the globe's most powerful states. Different actors may take the lead, and the strategies may keep changing, but at the end of the day, the battle for control over strategically significant regions continues to be a defining feature of the international relations.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on major findings, this research submits a few recommendations:

The US government needs to change its stand towards Latin America. Rather than unleashing sanctions and adopting other confrontational policies to the region, it should seek a balanced and cooperative relationship. Robust diplomatic and economic interactions can be a source of more sustainable influence in the region.

American policymakers need to recognize that Latin American nations are not mere extensions of the US hemispheric policy. They are sovereign political entities capable of making their own strategic decisions. Respecting their sovereignty, acknowledging their capacity as partners in the Americas, and recognizing their existence as separate entities with distinct strategic interests are key elements for the improvement of relations with these countries.