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To cite this article: David G. Haglund (11 Sep 2026): The “Donroe Doctrine” and its impact upon North American defence: revisiting *The US–Canada Security Relationship*, Canadian Foreign Policy Journal, DOI: [10.1080/11926422.2026.2724292](https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2026.2724292)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2026.2724292>



Published online: 11 Sep 2026.



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The “Donroe Doctrine” and its impact upon North American defence: revisiting *The US–Canada Security Relationship*

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ABSTRACT

One of Joel Sokolsky’s principal areas of research has been Canada–US security and defence relations. This chapter revisits the 1989 book on those relations that Joel and I co-edited and seeks to assess the likely impact upon the bilateral relationship of the Trump administration’s recent elevation of the Western hemisphere as a focus of American grand strategy. This elevation has been referred to by one New York City tabloid as the “Donroe Doctrine.” Although this play on words, which takes its inspiration from the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, conveys a jocular tone, the US’s two northern neighbours – Canada and Denmark (via Greenland) – fail to see much humour in it. This article assesses the Donroe Doctrine in a diachronic, comparative context, with emphasis upon three issue-areas: (1) Canada–US cooperation within the broader NATO framework; (2) Canada–US cooperation within the narrow continental North American one; and (3) Canadian defence procurement decision making.

RÉSUMÉ

L’un des domaines principaux de recherche de Joël Sokolsky porte sur les relations entre le Canada et les États-Unis en matière de sécurité et de défense. Ce chapitre revient sur l’ouvrage traitant de ces relations, publié en 1989, que Joël et moi-même avons coédité, et cherche à évaluer l’impact probable, sur les relations bilatérales, de la décision récente de l’administration Trump de faire de l’hémisphère occidental un axe central de la grande stratégie américaine. Cette promotion a été qualifiée par un tabloïd newyorkais de « Doctrine de Donroe ». Bien que ce jeu de mots, qui s’inspire de la Doctrine de Monroe de 1823, revête un ton enjoué, les deux voisins du nord des États-Unis – le Canada et le Danemark (par l’intermédiaire du Groenland) – n’y trouvent rien d’amusant. Cet article analyse la Doctrine de Donroe dans une perspective diachronique et comparative, en mettant l’accent sur trois domaines : 1) la coopération entre le Canada et les États-Unis dans le cadre plus large de l’OTAN ; 2) la coopération entre le Canada et les États-Unis dans le cadre plus restreint de l’Amérique du Nord continentale ; et 3) le processus décisionnel canadien en matière d’approvisionnement en équipement de défense.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 August 2026

Accepted 22 August 2026

KEYWORDS

Donald Trump; Western hemisphere; Monroe Doctrine; Canada; United States; NATO; defence procurement

Introduction: What hath Trump wrought?

Samuel F. B. Morse may not have been original when he cribbed a biblical passage to convey the emotion he was feeling upon demonstrating his invention, the telegraph, to a fascinated group of onlookers in the US Capitol Building. But the query he cabled to his assistant waiting at the Baltimore railroad station on 24 May 1844 was certainly a memorable one: “What hath God wrought?”¹ Given the cult-like status accorded to America’s current president by his dedicated (if shrinking) congregation of idolaters, there is justification in paraphrasing Morse in this chapter’s introduction, assuming we first strip the paraphrase of its theological, not to say blasphemous, undertones: Donald Trump really *has* wrought – for the time being, at least – an amazing transformation in the tenor of security and defence relations between the United States and its longest-standing continuous ally, Canada. No more, it seems, can Canada–US security ties be held to epitomise the most affectively “special” of the special relationships either country has with anyone else – the veritable platinum standard among special relationships.² All by himself, the alchemist of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue has pulled off the near-impossibility of transforming platinum into lead. Still, things could get worse in the bilateral relationship, for NORAD continues in existence, and so long as it does there is an undoubted specialness – behaviourally even if not affectively – about Canada–US military ties, for Canada surely remains the only country in the world that is permitted to be in command of and issue orders to US troops *on US soil* during a direct attack on the United States.

NORAD to the contrary notwithstanding, no one would deny that the emotional tone of the bilateral relations has taken a decided turn for the worse since Donald Trump returned to the White House in late January 2025. Symbolising this downturn in bilateral relations has been the emergence, during the president’s second administration, of a “Donroe Doctrine” in American foreign policy. Although often attributed to Trump, this bit of word play on the genuine article – the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 – was as unoriginal with him as the quoted words in the paragraph above had been with Morse. In the president’s case, the catchphrase first appeared in print a couple of weeks prior to his second inauguration, splayed in giant font atop the front page of the *New York Post* of 8 January 2025, drawing readers’ attention to what the editors thought was likely to be the hallmark of the incoming administration’s foreign policy: a reconcentration upon the Western hemisphere as the primary focus of American grand strategy. Depicting the editorial hypothesis, the cover page featured a beaming chief executive standing in front of a wall map of North America and brandishing a pointer highlighting the transformation of traditional geographic references he had made with his presidential Sharpie, such that the Gulf of Mexico became the “Gulf of America,” Greenland “Our Land,” the Panama Canal the “Pana-Maga Canal,” and Canada the “51st State.”³

But Trump so liked the label the *Post* had chosen for his emerging grand strategy that he quickly and proudly adopted it as his own. True to the rubric, the president, in his national security strategy issued later in the year, confirmed that the Western hemisphere *would* become what it had not been for many decades, the cynosure of US grand strategy: “After years of neglect, the United States will reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere, and to protect our homeland

and our access to key geographies throughout the region.”⁴ Not since the first two terms of Franklin D. Roosevelt with his celebrated Good Neighbor Policy⁵ has an American grand strategy been so focused upon the Western hemisphere⁶ – although in the case of the current administration, “bad” rather than “good” might be the more appropriate adjective chosen to modify “neighbour.”

Those antithetic adjectives speak to a larger truth about the Monroe Doctrine as the ideational sheet-anchor of American grand strategy from 1823 until 1941. It was originally intended as a protective measure to advance not just America’s interests but possibly those of its southern neighbours as well, at a time when it appeared as if Old World powers intended to undo Spanish America’s new-found independence from Madrid’s colonialism. Over the course of the nineteenth century, it morphed into an offensive, menacing, measure interpreted as granting America license to run roughshod over those very same neighbours’ interests.⁷ With respect to Canadian security interests, the doctrine in its early career was more or less irrelevant, since Canada could count on British power providing whatever protection it might require – not excluding protection from the US itself. But during the twentieth century, *pari passu* with the development of cordial Anglo-American relations,⁸ the doctrine would emerge as a source of support for Canadian interests against Germany and, to a lesser extent, Japan.⁹ Following the Second World War, it became for the US a geostrategic artefact, a vestige of a bygone era made irrelevant by new international power realities ratifying one obvious point: American security interests had now become so globe-spanning that prioritising the Western hemisphere made little sense in light of such new imperatives as “forward defence” and “extended deterrence.”¹⁰ At the start of the current Trump administration, though, the Monroe Doctrine has again been poised to assume paramount importance, raising questions about whether the US could or should continue its post-1945 emphasis upon forward military deployments through alliance mechanisms.¹¹ The war against Iran that commenced in late February 2026, however, has led many to wonder just how seriously the administration’s national security strategy deserved to be taken. Perhaps the NSS will go the way of many things Trumpian, as something to be taken seriously though not literally?

This article does indeed take the NSS and its related “Donroe Doctrine” seriously. In recognition of the career accomplishments of Joel Sokolsky, project organiser Andrea Charron suggested I examine Donroeism through the lens of a book Joel and I co-edited in what can now look to be a long-forgotten era in Canada–US alliance relations. The book, *The U.S.-Canada Security Relationship*, made its appearance in the final stages of the Cold War.¹² I return to it later in these pages with a view to determining whether, and if so how, the Donroe Doctrine might be said to have wrought fundamental and *lasting* change in Canada–US security relations. That analysis will concentrate upon asking how the chapters have stood up despite the passage of more than three-dozen years since they were written. Notwithstanding the naturally diverse thematic orientations of any edited volume, one foundational idea undergirded all twelve of the book’s chapters: the basically solid structure of Canada–US security and defence relations of the late 1980s could be expected to endure. None challenged the meaning or solidity of the two countries’ status as allies, notwithstanding that all authors understood there would be many inevitable points of friction, of the sort that routinely attract attention *whenever* allies deal with other allies.

Apropos those intra-alliance frictions, Jimmy Carter's secretary of defence, Harold Brown, was once reputed to have asked an aide who had burst into his office with the alarming news that NATO was in disarray, "When has the alliance ever *been* in array?"¹³ In a similar vein, a future American ambassador to NATO quipped as the alliance was approaching its fortieth anniversary that it "had had about as many crises as birthdays."¹⁴ The two American officials' responses could apply a fortiori to the alliance under discussion in these pages, the bilateral Canada–US one. There never truly *was* for the Canada–US alliance any frictionless period of bliss, just as there had never been such a period for NATO. Nevertheless, the *affective* quality of the two countries' security and defence relations during the years covered in our book does seem, from today's coign of vantage, to be light years removed from the frosty climate of contemporary bilateral relations. Of course, all the NATO allies might be said to be in the same tricky spot when it comes to dealing with the mercurial American president, but they really are not, and the Donroe Doctrine tells us the reason.

For as upsetting as he has been to those other allies, Donald Trump has *never* mused about an *Anschluss* with Germany, or Britain, or France, or any other European land – save for the partial exception of one. That partial exception, of course, is Denmark, whose territory of Greenland he had set his sights on amputating for some time,¹⁵ ideally to be effected in the same way that America severed the Danish West Indies from the mother country in early 1917, namely through treaty-sanctioned purchase not conquest.¹⁶ To Canadians, the stated aim of Trumpian disruption appears much more sinister, with many in the country taking his Donroe Doctrine as a signal that he wishes nothing less than to expunge Canada from the community of states and absorb it fully into the Union. A recent collaborative survey conducted by the University of Calgary and Nanos Research found that an astonishing 44.1 per cent of respondents put the "US/Trump" atop the list of the five biggest threats facing Canada, far ahead of the other four choices on the list (in descending order these were China, trade wars, immigration, and Russia) – so far ahead that six times as many Canadians assessed Trump's America rather than China to be the country's chief threat, even though the last time this poll was conducted in 2020, it was China that had carried off these dubious honours.¹⁷

Given what Trump has so clearly wrought, it is necessary to recall the nature of the bilateral alliance as it had once been, prior to his tenure in office, especially his current term. By setting contemporary challenges to Canada–US security and defence cooperation against the background of the alliance issues that Joel and I had covered in our 1989 book, I hope to provide some contextual awareness of our current predicament. Before getting to those issues and asking what has and has *not* changed since 1989, I first turn, in the next section, to an exploration of the special qualities of the Canada–US alliance, from its inception in August 1940 down to the current era of the Donroe Doctrine. Following this examination of what "array" might be said to have implied at the time our book appeared, I switch focus and in the third (and penultimate) section of this article I examine three specific issue-areas on today's bilateral security agenda that look surprisingly familiar to those who followed events in the late 1980s. I conclude on a possibly counterintuitive note, by suggesting that the Donroe Doctrine, precisely because of its menacing qualities, might provide Canada with the necessary stimulus for bringing its traditional budgetary hesitations into harmony with its defence-policy aspirations, to the benefit of the latter.

The Canadian-American alliance: from “array” to disarray?

To grasp the contemporary implications of the Donroe Doctrine for Canada–US security relations, the best point of departure is the nature of their alliance, particularly when it is cast in terms of what Charles Kupchan has identified as the third and final stage of “stable peace theory.”¹⁸ Kupchan’s theory can be considered both a derivative of the more well-known “democratic peace theory” (DPT) as well as an addendum thereto. Although both theories might be said to capture key dimensions of the kind of “peaceful change” in international relations of which Canada and the US had once been exemplars, Kupchan’s is more germane to the argument in this article because it explicitly introduces the notion of “friendship” as a corollary of stable peace. Today, “friendship” is precisely the quality of the Canadian–American alliance that has been put to the severest test by the Donroe Doctrine.

Friendship, for many IR scholars, must rank as the epitome of wishful and possibly deluded thinking. Especially is this the case for those, realist or otherwise, who have taken to heart the oft-cited remark of one mid-nineteenth century British prime minister about states having neither eternal friends nor eternal enemies, but only eternal interests.¹⁹ To those scholars, “friendship” is a conceptual category finding no place in serious inquiry into the causes of war and the conditions of peace.²⁰ And yet, until quite recently, friendship was held to be eminently and routinely embraceable by many whose scholarly or policy focus was less on IR theory and more on Canada–US relations. It is no surprise to discover that the government of Mark Carney abstained in July 2026 from celebrating an important US benchmark, the 250th anniversary of its declaring independence from Britain, with the kind of lavish publication gifted to the United States by the government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau on the occasion of its bicentennial in 1976, a costly and sumptuously illustrated volume bearing the simple but revelatory title of *Between Friends/Entre Amis*.²¹

Long before the Trump era, when it actually had been the norm to speak of bilateral friendship, not only had Canada and the US seemingly found the recipe for keeping the regional peace as between themselves, but their happy model was even thought to be exportable to such less fortunate parts of the world as Europe, bearing the shipping label of the “North American Idea.”²² Although Kupchan himself did not traffic in this latter conceit, it is clear that his three “stages” of stable peace captured the essence of what many Canada–US specialists regarded as having been the formula for the success of North America.

Those three stages were: (1) rapprochement, signifying burying the hatchet and forgetting bygone squabbles with all their grudges; (2) security community, understood as meaning that the states in question went further than hatchet-burying, and resolved *never* to settle whatever disputes might arise between them through the use of force or even the threat to use force²³; and (3) what Kupchan terms “union,” which is not so much a constitutional bonding as it is a cognitive one, sealed by a kind of deep and comprehensive security cooperation suggestive of tight military alliance. For Kupchan, union denotes the highest stage of stable peace, one in which the interacting states participate in the shaping of a new identity through a process he labels “narrative generation.” This means that elites in the two states can no longer quite see their counterparts on the other side of the boundary as being fundamentally different from themselves, when it comes to

the defence of North America. This is why he says that in a theoretical sense, the iterative construction of stable peace started in realism (rapprochement engendered by restraint), passed through liberalism (security community), and finished in constructivism (collective identity).²⁴

As the survey data cited earlier indicate, many Canadians today appear to believe that an American resort to the use of force against Canada cannot be ruled out – indeed, not a few believe it has been positively ruled *in*, with an invasion thought to be just around the corner.²⁵ This worry that the North American security community might not be permanent began to get expressed by a few scholars even during the first Trump administration,²⁶ but it has flourished along with the vaunting of the second administration's Donroe Doctrine. In short, many sense that the security community, the single most important attribute of the bilateral relationship since its "founding" in the first half of the twentieth century, is in jeopardy, possibly even on life-support, and all because Donald Trump has made no secret of his desire to change the territorial status quo in North America exactly in the manner depicted on that *New York Post* front page.

Now, it must be emphasised that this president, regardless of his expressed desire that Canada should be part of the US, has not announced any intention of using force to bring about annexation. In fact, during an early May 2025 White House meeting with Prime Minister Mark Carney, Trump came close to admitting that forcible acquisition was a non-starter, telling a reporter who asked whether he would invade Canada that it was "highly unlikely."²⁷ This reassurance (if that is what it is) comes as very cold comfort to a Canadian public and political class that had grown used to the thought that Canada and the US were the best of friends, and that in a crunch Canada could always count upon America to backstop its physical security. In a word, Canadians have felt, understandably, that they have been mightily *betrayed* by an American ally that has turned from "protector to predator."²⁸ The sense of betrayal many Americans experienced towards France during the Iraq War of 2003 does not even come close to matching the feelings of Canadians today towards an American president who has done so much to rubbish the Canada–US relationship.²⁹ This is why it is so wrong, as some in the Trump administration seem to want to do, to claim that somehow the downturn in Canada–US relations is due to Canadian "anti-Americanism."

It is not that Canada has lacked a traditionally robust anti-American constituency, for ever since the country's winning of home rule in 1867 – and, indeed, well before then – there have been many Canadians who cannot regard America with other than the most jaundiced eye, no matter who happened to be in the White House.³⁰ But there have been even more Canadians who have *not* typically sought refuge in this ontological redoubt in which an American (and debased) "significant other" serves as means of locating one's Canadian identity and sanctifying one's self-worth.³¹ Thus it is noteworthy that some of the most hostile reactions to the president's annexation musings have come *not* from the usual suspects in Canada (i.e. the inveterate anti-Americans), but from suddenly embittered constituencies that not very long ago were *pro*-American. A case in point is the premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, who had been hoping for a Trump victory over Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election.

Since over the past couple of years there had been no change in either the structure of the international system (the Waltzian "third image") or the composition of the American socio-politico-demographic order (the "second image") that might have been dramatic

enough to explain the contemporary malaise in Canada–US relations, many analysts (myself included) are left to conclude that the trashing of those relations has been mostly if not solely the work of a chief executive whom one otherwise normally pro-American Canadian journalist describes as “a simpleton, surrounded by fools and lunatics.”³² In short, the problem of the day in Canada–US relations can be lodged in the Waltzian “first image,” which to the dismay of many IR theorists (not excluding Kenneth Waltz himself) stresses the agency of individual leaders over that of either societal or “systemic” forces when either stasis or change is under discussion.³³

In this respect, Canadian ire is really directed more at the president than at the people of the United States. And in this, Canadians are not so terribly different from citizens of other allied countries, who “rate” this president so poorly that even Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin can appear cuddly in comparison.³⁴ And judging from Trump’s plunging approval ratings since he launched the war on Iran in late February 2026, Americans themselves are souring on their chief executive. But even before the war with Iran began, many Americans were becoming upset with Trump because of the way he was treating allies.³⁵ One such American was former president Joe Biden, who in a rare public appearance following his catastrophic debate with Donald Trump in late June 2024, lashed out at his successor’s Donroe Doctrine pretentiousness, especially when directed against allies in the Western hemisphere.

Biden’s scolding was delivered in a BBC Radio Four interview with host Nick Robinson, which aired early in May 2025, some three months into his successor’s second term. Commenting critically on Trump’s well-advertised desire to alter the territorial status quo in the northern half of the New World, Biden asked, “What the hell’s going on here? What president ever talks like that?”³⁶ Biden was certainly right to underscore how the annexation of territory in the hemisphere – including Canadian, no less! – was not exactly at the top of the average American’s wish-list these days;³⁷ at the very least, it seems terribly retro, the kind of activity that veritably screeches “nineteenth century” and “Manifest Destiny.” Yet, Biden’s adjudging annexation impulses to be axiomatically beneath the dignity of the Oval Office was a distortion of the historical record, for there had been other occupants of the White House who imagined that adding Canada to the Republic, whether by hook or crook, would be a smart thing to do. Admittedly, the list of such presidents may not be a particularly long one, but it does contain some notable names, including those of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Knox Polk, and could even be expanded to include those of Ulysses S. Grant and Benjamin Harrison.³⁸ The point is that prior to Trump, no president since Harrison’s time had been known to wish the disappearance of Canada as a sovereign state, and Harrison himself “only” envisioned doing the deed by inflicting economic pain on Canada in hopes that Canadians themselves would voluntarily choose annexation over continued hardship.³⁹ So, while Trump may well have no intention, as he intimated in that May 2025 meeting with Carney, actually to invade Canada, he definitely appears to be acting as a latter-day Benjamin Harrison.

Our 1989 book in a diachronic context

As mentioned above, while in 1989 there was no shortage of items worth being disputed by the two allies and debated by scholars – whether in the narrower North American

framework or the broader transatlantic one – few sentient observers at the time our book came out could have imagined that some day Canada–US relations would feature such a dismal turn as the one taken during the past two years. Such has been the impact of the Donroe Doctrine.

The book itself was the product of a conference organised by the Queen's Centre for International Relations (QCIR),⁴⁰ of which I was director at the time and Joel a senior fellow (and unofficially my "deputy" director). That conference, held in Kingston in June 1988, was intended to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the historic address delivered by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on the Queen's campus, which has generally been interpreted as marking the beginning of a long period in which it could be reasonably assumed that each North American country understood it had a "vital interest" in helping to assure the physical security of the other; it was not quite an alliance, but it certainly paved the way for their security and defence "union" (in Kupchan's sense) two years later, at Ogdensburg, NY. It was to the 1938 reciprocal undertaking that I would later give the label, the "Kingston Dispensation."⁴¹

The book's contents were drawn from the papers presented at the conference. The authors were all associated in one way or the other with the DND-funded QCIR,⁴² and they came from Canada (mainly), the US, and the Federal Republic of Germany. Half of them were either active or retired career military officers; the rest were university-affiliated researchers. To the extent the edited collection had a theme that could be captured in a phrase, it was best understood to be an inquiry into the current state and future prospects of the Canada–US alliance. Its three main subthemes were (1) Canada, the US, and collective defence within the transatlantic alliance; (2) bilateral controversies in continental (i.e. North American) defence; and (3) upcoming procurement decisions facing Canada. The back cover ran a blurb that set out the objectives of our collective research project and book, which is quoted here because it fairly accurately⁴³ captures what we sought to do:

Fifty years ago, Franklin D. Roosevelt's pledge that the United States would "not stand idly by" if Canadian security was threatened cemented a close North American alliance. However, the links between the two countries have evolved as the international security environment has changed. The immediacy of the bomber threat in the early nuclear era led Washington to regard Canadian territory as an indispensable strategic first line for the United States. But Canada's strategic significance [viz., to the US] declined dramatically with the advent of intercontinental ballistic missiles and with the globalization of U.S. security interests.

Not until the early 1980s did renewed interest in strategic defense as a complement to deterrence revive the importance of North America for U.S. security. This book assesses the critical issues shaping the bilateral defense relationship, including the future of ballistic missile defense (BMD), the increased deployment of air- and sea-launched cruise missiles, security and sovereignty in the Arctic, the growing debate within Canada over security relations with the United States, and the implications of the historic INF Treaty for North American defense.

The authors argue that these developments will both concentrate and complicate the defense relationship for Washington and Ottawa. Given the intricacies of global politics, it is clear that bilateral controversy between the United States and Canada over security issues will be more intense in the coming decade than at any time since World War II.

What the publisher's blurb was alluding to as representing "more intense" challenges likely to surface during the 1990s consisted of the trio of problem-sets mentioned above. As noted, the first of these concerned a debate within Canada about the value of the country's two alliances (the bilateral one with the US alone, and the multilateral one with a set of fifteen other NATO allies [including the US]). Everyone "knew" fully well that even if the Cold War might not be ending any time soon – and how wrong we all turned out to be in this regard! – change was incontestably afoot. The deepening of détente with a Soviet Union headed by the likeable Mikhail Gorbachev, coupled with the astounding progress in arms-control and disarmament measures exemplified by the Washington treaty of 1987 leading to the removal and destruction of Soviet and American intermediate range nuclear forces,⁴⁴ meant that the usually turbulent transatlantic waters were hardly going to grow calmer in coming years, and might well become even choppier.⁴⁵

In Canada, for instance, some were beginning to question the utility and (to more than a few) even the morality of continued involvement in NATO, topics covered by no fewer than three of the book's chapters,⁴⁶ reflecting a growing Canadian angst about alliances, especially within the one federal political party (the NDP) that was giving every sign of believing that neutrality was the path on which Canada should be embarked. Re-reading those chapters nearly forty years after they were written gives us a sense of what has changed, and not changed, over the decades. By the late 1980s it was common to find critics in federal parties other than the NDP who also fretted about Canada's commitment to NATO, especially because of the expense of maintaining the forward basing of Canadian forces in Germany. Some of the critics even wondered whether Canada should be bothered with European security at all, and recommended the country turn its strategic attention to such other, more "deserving," parts of the globe as Asia, Africa, or Latin America.

Today, NATO skeptics have become rare on the ground in Canada, almost in inverse proportion to such critics' growing presence in the US. Whatever else the Donroe Doctrine may have done, it has certainly made Canadians more conscious of the value of transatlantic security and defence ties than at any time since the early 1950s, when Ottawa opted to station forces in Germany so as to shore up Western defences against the Soviet Union.⁴⁷ Trump may not have made America great again, but he certainly appears to have made Canada European again.

Other chapters grouped under those first two subthemes also retain surprising contemporary relevance. For instance, the Conliffe chapter on the Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) speaks to an issue that resurfaced in the spring of 2026, when US defence secretary Pete Hegseth announced the "suspension" of the PJBD, ostensibly to express the administration's irritation with the Carney government's commitment to collective defence. A re-reading of this chapter today reveals just how inconsequential *is* this symbolic gesture, for its author had made it clear that by 1988 the PJBD's best years as a useful institution were well behind it and declared that the institution had entered a stage of its existence that could best be described as "limbo."⁴⁸

Also possessed of contemporary resonance were the chapters addressing technological changes affecting North American collective defence, not least those suggesting a growing possibility that defences might someday become as practicable against ballistic missiles as they had become against long-range bombers,⁴⁹ an issue that has taken on

new salience in a Donroe Doctrine context, given the Trump administration's enthusiasm to develop a "Golden Dome" that might defend North American – or at least US – territory from ballistic-missile attacks. As well, the John Anderson chapter on North American air defence modernisation spent much time discussing the technical challenges occasioned with a promising potential feature of the new North Warning System, Over-the-Horizon-Backscatter (OTHB) radars.⁵⁰ Recently, Canada and Australia [!] have signed a \$2.5 billion contract to develop just such an OTHB system for the Arctic.⁵¹

But it is the book's third subtheme, on procurement choices facing Ottawa, that really gives rise to a sense of *déjà vu*, since all three of its chapters took an analytical run at different pieces of the same puzzle concerning what at the time was being mooted as one of the most expensive and controversial Canadian procurement decisions of all time, involving submarines. These were not just any subs; they were going to be nuclear-propelled, so that their proposed acquisition in the 1987 White Paper on Defence⁵² was guaranteed to rouse even more opposition than defence-procurement decisions during the Cold War had been accustomed to arousing from a Canadian public and political class that had grown used not so much to free-riding as to what Joel has so memorably labelled "easy riding."⁵³ The public and its political handlers back then had been counting on a benevolent US to look after Canada if the going got rough, thereby enabling the country to allocate more scarce resources to other "spending envelopes" – including and especially those needed to maintain Canada's social-welfare net. Accordingly, the three chapters on this subtheme covered: (1) technological aspects of nuclear-propelled attack submarines (SSNs) contrasted with diesel-electric attack subs⁵⁴; (2) the nonproliferation consequences of a Canadian decision to opt for nuclear subs⁵⁵; and (3) the strategic rationale for the Canadian Navy acquiring such boats.⁵⁶

It is fair to say that of all the issues raised in that White Paper, nothing came close to matching the controversy stirred up by the ambitious and costly proposal for Canada to acquire some ten to twelve SSNs. With a projected multiyear price tag of \$8 billion at a time when the country's total annual defence budget was slightly less than \$9 billion, the submarines shocked not only because of their nuclear aspect, but also because of their cost. In 1989, the submarine acquisition would be scrapped, for reasons related to cost and to changing geopolitical conditions.⁵⁷

The latter – the radically altered geopolitical landscape brought about by the Cold War's ending – was probably more significant in the cancellation decision. Apropos of this, I had the privilege and pleasure of witnessing a remarkable bit of hallway "after-action" banter between two of the volume's contributors to the SSN section, S. Mathwin Davis and Joel. This was during the summer of 1990, in the week when Soviet leader Gorbachev gave the green light to German reunification *within* NATO, at a meeting with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in the Caucasus. This effectively brought the Cold War to a close,⁵⁸ and prompted this query from Sam Davis, a retired admiral in the Canadian navy who was then teaching in the Queen's School of Policy Studies and had never been a big supporter of the SSNs: "Well, young Sokolsky, where's your threat now?" To this query Joel replied without so much as missing a beat, "Same place it's always been, Admiral, Treasury Board."

Postscript

This riposte not only testifies to Joel's ability to be quick with a quip, but it also contributes to our own ability to judge whether the ill-fated SSN acquisition should trigger a sense of déjà vu on the part of those who follow Canadian defence policy. Ottawa has once more indicated it will be pursuing an expensive contract for an ambitious submarine-acquisition programme, albeit this time the boats in question are diesel-electric not nuclear-propelled. Up to a dozen are eventually to be acquired from the German/Norwegian consortium spearheaded by Thyssen-Krupp Marine Systems (TKMS).⁵⁹

Should the expensive acquisition of the TKMS Type 212CD manage to escape the earlier fate of the SSNs, it will have a great deal to do with the Donroe Doctrine. For unlike the North America of the late 1980s, when there was much evident good will as between an American government headed first by Ronald Reagan and then by George H. W. Bush, and a Canadian government headed by Brian Mulroney, today's continental mood stands as a powerful deterrent against the former temptation of Canada's public and political class alike to imagine that, when the chips were down, they could rely on American benevolence and power to safeguard Canada. And for *that*, Donald Trump would have to deserve the credit.⁶⁰

Notes

1. Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 1–2. The passage is from Numbers 23:23, and the suggestion to use it was passed along to him by Annie Ellsworth, daughter of the US patent commissioner, Henry Leavitt Ellsworth.
2. Haglund and Nicol, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall."
3. *New York Post*, 8 January 2025, 1.
4. White House, *National Security Strategy*, 15.
5. Herring, *Good Neighbors*; Guerrant, *Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy*; Wood, *Making of the Good Neighbor Policy*; and Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy*.
6. Haglund, *Latin America and the Transformation*.
7. Perkins, *Monroe Doctrine, 1867–1907*; Perkins, *Hands Off*; Merk, *Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism*; May, *Making of the Monroe Doctrine*; Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean*; Gilderhus, "Monroe Doctrine: Meanings and Implications"; and Ricard, "The Roosevelt Corollary."
8. Sloan, "Anglo-American Relations"; Perkins, *Great Rapprochement*; Hood, *Gunboat Diplomacy, 1895–1905*; Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement*; Bertram, *Birth of Anglo-American Friendship*; Adams, *Brothers Across the Ocean*; and Schake, *Safe Passage*.
9. Beatty, "The 'Canadian Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine"; and MacCormac, *Canada: America's Problem*.
10. Whitaker, *Western Hemisphere Idea*.
11. For one compelling argument in favour of American strategic retrenchment, see Ashford, *First Among Equals*.
12. Haglund and Sokolsky, *U.S.-Canada Security Relationship*.
13. Quoted in Heisbourg, "Europe/Etats-Unis," 112.
14. Hunter, "Will the United States Remain a European Power?" 210.
15. Bosold and Haglund, "Grönland, Objekt der Begierde, zweiter Akt."
16. Tansill, *Purchase of the Danish West Indies*.
17. Nanos, "Canadians Are Clamoring for a Stronger Military."
18. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*.
19. This was the British statesman, Henry John Temple, the 3rd Viscount Palmerston; see Ridley, *Lord Palmerston*; and Chambers, *Palmerston*.
20. Berenskoetter, "Friends, There Are No Friends?"

21. Monk, *Between Friends/Entre Amis*; and Bangarth and Keough, "Entre Amis in an Era of Polarization."
22. Macdonald, *North American Idea*; Page, "Canada as the Exponent of North American Idealism"; Barry, "The Politics of 'Exceptionalism'"; Hillmer, "O. D. Skelton and the North American Mind"; Pastor, *North American Idea*; and Anderson, "What Was Once So Near, Is Now Very Far."
23. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*; and Adler and Barnett, "Governing Anarchy."
24. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*, 52.
25. Khan, "Trump's Hostility Towards Canada."
26. Greaves, "Democracy, Donald Trump."
27. PMO, "Prime Minister Carney."
28. Marche, "New Canada, Old Canada."
29. For examples of a Francophobic mindset in America two or so decades ago that represented a low-decibel version of the current "anti-American" mood in Canada, see Miller and Molesky, *Our Oldest Enemy*; and Timmerman, *French Betrayal of America*.
30. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home?*; Nossal, "Anti-Americanism in Canada"; Nossal, "A Thermostatic Dynamic?"; Bow, "Anti-Americanism in Canada"; and Azzi and Hillmer, "The Presidents and the Polls."
31. Buckner, "How Canadian Historians Stopped Worrying." This process of "othering" for purposes of self-identification and self-valorisation is the core idea behind "social identity theory" (SIT), with applicability to all the world's regions and not just North America. See Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour"; and Brown, "Social Identity Theory."
32. Coyne, "Trump's Iran Deal Is a National Humiliation."
33. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*.
34. Wike et al., "Trump Gets Negative Reviews Internationally"; and Vanderklippe, "Trump's International Approval Ratings Plummet."
35. Schake, "Dispensable Nation."
36. Quoted in Zurcher, "Five Takeaways from Biden's BBC Interview."
37. According to data from a Nanos/Ipsos poll released in July 2026, only 11 percent of Americans said they had an unfavourable opinion of Canada, while 71 percent of Canadians confessed to having an unfavourable opinion of the US. Nanos, "A North American Divide."
38. Callahan, *American Foreign Policy*; Warner, *Idea of Continental Union*; and Granatstein and Hillmer, *For Better or for Worse*.
39. Spetter, "Harrison and Blaine."
40. Since renamed the Queen's Centre for International and Defence Policy (QCIDP).
41. Prime Minister King's similar pledge that Canada would do what it could to safeguard US physical security was made a few days later, in a speech at Woodbridge, Ontario. See Haglund, "The 'Kingston Dispensation.'"
42. Under the auspices of the Military and Strategic Studies Program (MSSP), which would later be replaced with the Security and Defence Forum (SDF).
44. On the Soviet side, these were the SS-4, SS-5, SS-12/22, SS-23, SS-20, and SSC-X-4 ballistic missiles; on the American side, the Pershing I and Pershing II ballistic missiles and the Ground-Launched Cruise Missiles.
45. Annuss, "The Future of Transatlantic Defense"; and Harris, "Trends in Alliance Conventional Defense Initiatives."
46. Young, "The Contemporary Defense Debate in Canada"; Bland, "Canadian Neutrality"; and Epp, "No East or West."
47. Rempel, "Canada's Troop Deployments in Germany."
48. Conliffe, "The Permanent Joint Board on Defense," 161–2.
49. Tutwiler, "The United States and the Future"; and Castel, "Ballistic Missile Defense, Arms Control."
50. J. Anderson, "Canada and the Modernization of North American Air Defense."
51. Norman, "Canada, Australia Sign Agreement."
52. Government of Canada, *Challenge and Commitment*.

53. Sokolsky, "Realism: Canadian Style," 11.
54. Davis, "Nuclear Submarines for Canada."
55. Haglund, "The SSNs and the Question of Nonproliferation."
56. Sokolsky, "Parting of the Waves?"
57. Wu and Fetterly, "Canadian Defence Policy."
58. Sarotte, *Not One Inch*, 94–6.
59. Chase, "Ottawa Picks Germany's TKMS."
60. Urback, "Trump Is Making Canada Grow Up."

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the contributions of the many scholars with whom he met and exchanged ideas on the topic of the "Donroe Doctrine," while on a research trip to Europe in the spring of 2026. Among them were Marc Arwed Rutke and Lars Klein, both of Georg-August-Universität in Göttingen, Germany; Sten Rynning, Danish Institute for Advanced Study in Odense, Denmark; as well as the following Sweden-based scholars: Lisbeth Aggestam, Adrian Hyde-Price, and Isabelle Schierenbeck, all of the University of Gothenburg; Emin Poljarevic and Adam Hjorthén, of Uppsala University; Christophe Premat and Magnus Lembke, of Stockholm University; Niklas Bremberg, Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Stockholm; and Oscar Almén, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research was facilitated through an Erasmus Mundus Scholar Grant for mobility, awarded by the Euroculture Consortium and administered by the Faculty of Arts at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.

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