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Notes from the Field

Special Lecture Report: This is Whose Hemisphere?

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On 28 January, 2026, the Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies (CMSS), in collaboration with the Journal for Military and Strategic Studies (JMSS), hosted a transdisciplinary seminar titled *"This Is Whose Hemisphere?"* at the University of Calgary. The event brought together scholars to examine issues of shared concern across countries of the Western Hemisphere and to consider how different national and historical perspectives shape understandings of hemispheric relations.

The seminar was framed in part by a recent statement from the American Secretary of State asserting that "this is our hemisphere." Such a declaration raises an important question: whose hemisphere is being invoked, and how is that claim interpreted by different countries within it? The seminar convened historians, political scientists and strategic studies scholars specializing in the histories and politics of Canada, the United States, and several Latin American countries. Discussions sought to situate contemporary issues within broader historical contexts while encouraging dialogue across regional and disciplinary boundaries.

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Historically, Canadians have often not viewed their relationship with the United States as analogous to that experienced by many Latin American countries. However, scholars and commentators from Latin America have frequently suggested that this distinction may obscure important similarities in hemispheric dynamics. By bringing these perspectives together, the seminar hosted a comparative understanding of the political, historical, and intellectual frameworks that shape relations within the hemisphere.

The comments of the participants in the debate are contained in the transcripts of their presentations.[1] This report is a synthesis of the views expressed by these participants. It unfolds across several thematic section. It first discusses the ruptures in the international order and their implications for the shifting Canada-United States relationship, before turning to the historical foundations of hemispheric politics, including the creation of the Monroe Doctrine and the roots of nineteenth-century US expansion. The report then considers the contemporary political and economic developments in South America and their implications for hemispheric power dynamics, before concluding with questions of Arctic security and sovereignty.

Rupture in the International Order and Changing Canada–US Relations

Canada is increasingly being forced to reconsider its place not only within the hemisphere but within the global system more broadly. For decades, Canadian policymakers assumed a stable international environment anchored in alliances, shared democratic norms, and a close cultural and political relationship with the United States. That assumption now appears increasingly uncertain.

This sense of disruption reflects wider changes in the post–Second World War international system. For much of the Cold War period, despite its imperfections, the global order maintained a degree of stability, particularly through norms that discouraged the acquisition of territory by force. In recent decades, however, these norms have been repeatedly challenged. Examples frequently cited include the extension of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russian military actions in Ukraine and Georgia, and American attacks on Venezuela and Iran. Such developments have weakened long-standing taboos within the international system and contributed to a growing sense that the rules-based order is eroding.

These pressures have coincided with shifts in American foreign policy that challenge established alliance relationships. Historically, major powers have maintained dependable allies while

[1] The original video can be found here: https://youtu.be/JDWWlpJGg34?si=vcNj3R3XRsvdPwzI.

distancing themselves from unreliable partners. Yet recent developments suggest a reversal of this pattern, with the United States appearing increasingly willing to distance itself from longstanding allies while increasingly engaging with others. In Washington, for example, the leadership of Javier Milei in Argentina has at times been viewed more favourably than that of Canadian leadership, illustrating the changing diplomatic landscape. For Canada, these developments are particularly unsettling given the historically stable nature of the bilateral relationship. The Canada–US border has long been described as the world's longest undefended boundary, symbolizing a relationship largely free from territorial threat since the nineteenth century. Although earlier conflicts, including the War of 1812 and the Fenian Raids, demonstrated periods of tension, the twentieth century saw the emergence of a deep strategic partnership, strengthened by cooperation during the Second World War. Personal relationships between leaders such as William Lyon Mackenzie King and Franklin D. Roosevelt further reinforced this collaboration, fostering extensive institutional and diplomatic ties.

Today, some of this mutual familiarity has eroded. While Canadians remain closely attentive to American politics and society, Americans increasingly possess limited knowledge of Canada, even within academic institutions. This growing asymmetry contributes to a broader sense of distance between the two countries at both societal and institutional levels. At the same time, renewed attention has been drawn to the strategic significance of the Arctic. Once viewed largely as a remote and frozen frontier, the Arctic now represents an emerging geopolitical space where sovereignty, security, and resource competition may increasingly intersect. These developments have revived debate surrounding the historical meaning and contemporary relevance of the Monroe Doctrine. Traditionally associated with American opposition to external intervention in the Western Hemisphere, the doctrine has long been interpreted, often loosely, as applying primarily to Latin America. Historical examples of US intervention in the region, including policies articulated by figures such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, illustrate the evolving and sometimes ambiguous application of this principle. Current discussions suggest that the doctrine may again be undergoing reinterpretation within contemporary American foreign policy.

Finally, the increasing personalization of American foreign policy decision-making, particularly under the leadership of Donald Trump. In contrast to traditional institutional approaches, recent policy directions have appeared more transactional and leader-driven, emphasizing power, prestige, and short-term strategic advantage. In response to these shifts, there is a need for Canada to reassess its diplomatic priorities within the hemisphere. Strengthening engagement with democratic partners in Latin America, including countries such as Uruguay, Chile, and Brazil, could be a possible avenue for navigating an increasingly uncertain international

environment. Greater cooperation among middle powers may become essential in sustaining stability within both the hemisphere and the broader global order.

Canada–United States Economic Interdependence

A central theme of the seminar was the long-standing economic integration between Canada and the United States. Participants noted that the origins of this relationship can be traced to the 1840s in the former Province of Canada. During this period, policymakers adopted a standardized railway gauge matching that of the United States and replaced pounds, shillings, and pence with a decimal currency. These decisions reflected an early recognition that the colony's economic future would be closely connected to American markets. While political loyalties remained firmly tied to Britain, economic policy increasingly oriented itself toward facilitating cross-border exchange with the United States. This structural integration continues to shape the contemporary economic relationship. Canadian resources and industrial inputs remain deeply embedded in American supply chains. For example, Canadian lumber plays a significant role in the U.S. housing industry, illustrating the extent to which cross-border production and consumption have become intertwined. Although trade disputes and tariffs periodically emerge, the depth and breadth of this economic interdependence make it difficult to disentangle the two economies.

Discussions emphasized that this relationship is distinct from Canada's economic ties with other countries in the Western Hemisphere. Developed over nearly two centuries, it is reinforced by geography and longstanding trade patterns, with north–south trade between Canada and the United States often exceeding east–west trade within Canada itself. While participants acknowledged the importance of expanding trade relations with Mexico and other hemispheric partners, they also stressed the need for realism regarding the structural forces that continue to bind the Canadian and American economies. While political leadership in Washington may change, the underlying economic relationship between the two countries is likely to persist. This raises important questions about how Canada can navigate future shifts in American political leadership while maintaining a stable and pragmatic economic partnership.

Structural Limits to Global Growth and the Political Crisis of the Global Order

Over the past century, the world has experienced unprecedented economic and demographic expansion. The global population has grown from roughly two billion in the early twentieth century to more than eight billion today, while global economic output has expanded dramatically. During the same period, life expectancy has doubled, and the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has fallen significantly.

Much of this transformation was driven by the technological and economic changes associated with the Industrial Revolution and its twentieth-century acceleration. Advances in agriculture, including chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and the innovations collectively known as the Green Revolution, greatly expanded global food production and enabled sustained population growth. The rapid increase in fossil fuel consumption provided the energy necessary to support industrial expansion, while improvements in public health and the development of antibacterial medicines reduced the prevalence of infectious disease. More recently, the digital transformation associated with the rise of modern computing has further stimulated global productivity and economic integration. However, this long period of expansion may now be approaching significant limits. Environmental pressures, particularly those associated with climate change, are already imposing economic costs through extreme weather events, wildfires, droughts, and other disruptions. At the same time, global demographic trends are shifting. Several major economies, including China and Japan, have begun to experience population decline as birth rates fall below replacement levels, a pattern also visible across much of the developed world.

The political context that supported twentieth-century growth has also changed. During the Cold War, both the Western and Soviet blocs promoted economic development as a means of strengthening alliances and expanding influence. Although geopolitical rivalry persisted, this competition often encouraged investment in infrastructure, agricultural modernization, and technological development across the developing world. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a period of intensified economic globalization emerged, characterized by the expansion of global markets and the spread of neoliberal economic policies. Yet the benefits of this system have not been distributed evenly. While significant income gains have occurred among the poorest populations globally and among the wealthiest segments of society, income growth has been comparatively stagnant for many middle- and working-class populations within industrialized democracies. Regions once defined by heavy industry, such as the American Rust Belt and comparable industrial regions in Europe and Canada, have experienced slower economic growth and social dislocation. This pattern of uneven development has contributed to rising political dissatisfaction and the growing appeal of nationalist and populist movements across many democratic societies. These trends suggest that the current geopolitical tensions may reflect greater structural changes within the global political economy. As economic growth slows, environmental pressures intensify, and demographic patterns shift, the international system appears to be entering a period of uncertainty. The institutional and political arrangements that supported the late twentieth-century order may no longer be sufficient, raising a fundamental question: What replaces it?

Historical Context: The Evolution of the Monroe Doctrine

First articulated by James Monroe in 1823, the Monroe Doctrine emerged in the context of the Latin American revolutions against Spanish rule. Monroe declared that any attempt by European powers to reimpose monarchical control in the Americas would be regarded as a threat to American peace and security and as an unfriendly act toward the United States. Although the language was assertive by nineteenth-century diplomatic standards, the United States at the time lacked the military capability to enforce such a policy, and the doctrine functioned largely as a statement of principle rather than an enforceable strategy.

In practice, the doctrine's early history was marked by considerable contradiction. Throughout the nineteenth century, though to a decreasing extent, European powers intervened in Latin America through force. Despite much heated rhetoric, the United States did not try to overthrow British North America, for fear of British retaliation. Prior to the American Civil War, however, the United States itself frequently violated the spirit of non-intervention through military expeditions and filibustering campaigns directed at territories such as Mexico, Nicaragua, Honduras, Cuba, and even Canada. These actions often reflected domestic political tensions, particularly the expansionist ambitions of pro-slavery interests in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century.

By the early twentieth century, the doctrine had evolved into a more explicit justification for American intervention in the hemisphere. The Roosevelt Corollary, introduced by Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, asserted the United States' right to *exercise international police power* in the Americas in response to instability or misconduct by Latin American governments. Although later moderated during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his Good Neighbour policy, intervention justified under this framework continued throughout the twentieth century. During the Cold War, American intervention in Latin America was frequently framed in terms of anti-communism and geopolitical rivalry.

Recent developments, however, were characterized as representing a significant departure from earlier patterns. Whereas previous interventions were often justified, however controversially, through strategic, ideological, or economic rationales, current actions appear increasingly disconnected from coherent national interests or established policy processes. This shift has raised concerns about the erosion of institutional constraints within U.S. foreign and defence policymaking.

Panellists highlighted the growing autonomy of specialized military structures such as the Joint Special Operations Command, whose expanded operational role since the late twentieth century has altered traditional chains of military oversight. Developments following the United States invasion of Grenada in 1983 contributed to this institutional shift, increasing the operational independence and resources available to special operations forces. Taken together, these trends suggest a transformation in the mechanisms through which American foreign policy is formulated and executed. For observers in Canada and elsewhere in the hemisphere, this raises important questions about accountability, strategic coherence, and the future direction of US policy in the Americas.

Roots of US Imperial Expansion in the 19th Century

Some panellists asserted that US imperial expansionism is not historically unprecedented. Rather, territorial expansion and imperial ambition were defining characteristics of the United States throughout the nineteenth century. Nearly forty percent of present-day US territory was acquired through the seizure of land from Mexico, demonstrating that aggressive expansion toward neighbouring states was a recurring feature of American state formation. From its earliest years, the United States developed within a world dominated by European imperial monarchies, and its political leaders conceived of the republic itself in imperial terms. Yet this imperialism was framed as fundamentally distinct from European models. Thomas Jefferson famously described the United States as an *empire for liberty*, a project that would expand territory and institutions while claiming to advance self-determination rather than domination.

Expansion was expected to occur as settlers moved westward, established communities, and eventually integrated these territories as autonomous states within an expanding republic. Under this vision, territorial growth and the spread of self-government were assumed to advance together. However, the historical reality frequently diverged from this idealized conception. Indigenous populations in the expanding frontier experienced the process not as the spread of liberty but as dispossession and the erosion of their sovereignty. Indigenous leaders, such as Tecumseh, a celebrated Shawnee chief, condemned American expansion as a destructive force that unleashed large-scale settlement and land seizure across the continent.

The logic of hemispheric authority also emerged through diplomatic doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine framed the Western Hemisphere as a distinct political sphere in which republican states required protection from European monarchical intervention. Although it did not formally advocate territorial acquisition, the doctrine asserted a form of US guardianship over the hemisphere based on the assumption that American republics shared common political interests

with the United States. This claim was contested from the outset. Latin American leaders, notably Simón Bolívar, rejected the notion that the political experiences of Spanish America resembled those of the United States and questioned the applicability of US institutions to other republican societies.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the ideological justification for expansion increasingly intersected with domestic political conflicts, particularly the preservation of slavery. Expansion into Texas and the subsequent war with Mexico were closely tied to pro-slavery interests that sought to secure new territories for slaveholding societies. Expansionist rhetoric framed these ambitions as a global struggle between monarchy and republicanism, masking the underlying debate over slavery. Critics within the United States, including political leaders John Quincy Adams, warned that expansion would undermine the country's claim to represent liberty. Mexican leaders likewise interpreted the annexation of Texas and the loss of territory in 1848 as clear evidence that the supposed empire for liberty operated through coercion rather than consent.

The consequences of this expansion proved deeply destabilizing. This conflict ultimately contributed to the outbreak of the American Civil War, revealing a central irony of nineteenth-century expansion: the territorial growth that solidified the United States as a continental power also intensified the internal contradictions that threatened its survival. Following the Civil War, the United States continued to consolidate a domestic form of empire through the integration of western territories and the subjugation of Indigenous nations. This process established patterns that would later shape overseas expansion, including the close relationship between state power, military force, and private economic interests. At the same time, many populations incorporated into the expanding republic remained excluded from full political participation, contradicting the foundational ideals of an empire for liberty.

External Powers and US Security Concerns in South America

Panellists identified the growing influence of external powers in South America and how it shapes American perceptions of regional security. Particular attention was given to the expanding presence of China, Iran, and Cuba, with Russia playing a more limited role, in shaping US strategic concerns in the hemisphere. China's presence in South America has expanded dramatically over the past two decades. China has become a major trading partner for several South American countries and has invested heavily in infrastructure, energy, agriculture, and telecommunications across the region. In Venezuela specifically, Chinese firms hold joint ventures in the oil sector and maintain substantial investments in telecommunications and

infrastructure. These economic ties have deepened Venezuela's financial dependence on China, particularly through loans and debt obligations tied to future oil exports.

Furthermore, the growing relationship between Venezuela and Iran is not to be understated. Since the presidency of Hugo Chávez, the two countries have developed extensive bilateral cooperation agreements across a range of sectors. In addition, the presence of Hezbollah networks in Venezuela has raised security concerns, particularly due to their involvement in illicit financial activities and transnational criminal networks. Venezuelan gold has reportedly played a role in financing these activities, strengthening the strategic connection between Tehran and Caracas.

The role of Cuba was also discussed, though some panellists suggested that its influence in Venezuela is more limited compared to that of China or Iran. Political considerations surrounding Cuba remain significant in Washington, particularly among policymakers advocating a harder line toward the Cuban government. However, this factor appears secondary to broader geopolitical concerns, especially the strategic competition with China. These developments suggest that US policy toward Venezuela is shaped less by issues such as narcotics trafficking, frequently cited in official rhetoric, and more by broader geopolitical considerations. While Venezuela functions as a transit point for narcotics produced elsewhere in the region, the primary drivers of American concern appear to relate to the strategic presence of rival powers and the security implications of their growing involvement.

The United States appears reluctant to pursue direct military intervention in Venezuela. Instead, American policy may seek a more compliant Venezuelan government while navigating the realities of entrenched political and military elites within the country. Figures such as Vladimir Padrino López and Diosdado Cabello remain influential within the Venezuelan state and military structures, complicating the prospects for rapid political change. Regional instability is further complicated by the presence of armed groups along the Venezuela–Colombia border, including the National Liberation Army (ELN). These organizations maintain networks across the border region and have developed cooperative relationships with elements of the Venezuelan military, adding another dimension to the security challenges facing the region.

Electoral Political, Economic Realignment, and the Limits of US Influence

Discussion turned to contemporary political and economic dynamics in South America, emphasizing upcoming elections and the broader geopolitical context shaping regional responses to US policy. Despite historically strong anti-American rhetoric in the region, reactions to the recent overthrow of Venezuela's government have been relatively muted. Public opinion in

several Latin American countries has shown limited opposition, and in some cases support, for US intervention, reflecting widespread regional frustration with the Venezuelan regime. At the same time, this response highlights the complexity of hemispheric politics and suggests that the notion of Latin America as a unified political space, or as a straightforward sphere of US influence, is increasingly misleading.

A key structural factor shaping this environment is the growing economic presence of China in South America. Over the past quarter century, Chinese trade and investment have expanded rapidly across sectors, particularly in South America's largest economies. While countries such as Mexico remain deeply integrated with the US economy, many South American states now conduct a significantly larger share of their trade with China than with the United States. Brazil, for example, exports roughly three times more to China than to the United States, underscoring the diversification of the region's economic relationships and the declining relative weight of US economic leverage. Recent political developments have also reflected a broader shift toward right-leaning or populist leadership across parts of Latin America. Governments emphasizing strong security policies, populist rhetoric, and cultural conservatism have gained traction amid persistent economic stagnation, rising crime, and growing public dissatisfaction with democratic institutions. The region has experienced nearly a decade of weak per-capita economic growth following the end of the commodities boom, contributing to political disillusionment and opening space for new political movements.

However, the political landscape remains far from uniformly conservative. The majority of Latin Americans still live under left-leaning governments, particularly in the region's largest states. Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil continue to be governed by left-of-center administrations, and several key elections in South America (Peru, Colombia, and Brazil), will shape the regional balance in the coming years. These elections are highly uncertain and illustrate the volatility of contemporary Latin American politics. Brazil provides a particularly significant case. As the largest economy in South America, it has demonstrated a degree of economic autonomy in its dealings with the United States. Recent tariff disputes revealed the limits of US leverage: Brazil's export diversification and its deep integration into Chinese markets for commodities like soybeans reduce the effectiveness of trade pressure. At the same time, Chinese firms have expanded their presence in Brazil's industrial sector, including large investments in electric vehicle production intended to supply the broader South American market.

These trends suggest that the traditional conception of the Western Hemisphere as a US 'backyard' increasingly fails to capture contemporary political and economic realities. South American states are embedded in a more diversified global economy and possess greater strategic

flexibility in their external relationships. As a result, the influence of US policy, particularly when reliant on tariffs or unilateral pressure, faces clear structural limits within the region.

Hemispheric Insecurity as a System of Risk Displacement

Discussion centred on reframing the question of *whose hemisphere* by instead examining the nature of the problem shaping insecurity across Latin America. Hemispheric insecurity emerges not simply from isolated governance failures, but from a broader regional system in which risks are displaced rather than resolved. Within this framework, weak states must be understood as political systems with their own internal logic rather than as failed versions of strong states. Authority is frequently fragmented, the enforcement of law is selective, and political arrangements often prioritize the survival of governing elites. Under these conditions, insecurity is not always treated as a problem to be eliminated; instead, it is often managed, redirected, or externalized. This dynamic is particularly significant in a region that continues to experience some of the highest levels of violence globally, largely driven by criminal activity rather than interstate conflict. Rising crime in countries historically viewed as relatively stable (including Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Panama) further illustrates that insecurity is not confined to individual national contexts but reflects broader regional patterns.

The dynamics of weak-state governance are evident in the Venezuelan case. Years of sanctions, economic collapse, and international isolation did not lead to the collapse of the governing system because political elites adapted to institutional weakness. Violence, migration, and criminal activity were effectively externalized, allowing domestic elites to avoid absorbing the full costs of instability while neighbouring states and civilian populations carried much of the burden. The removal of Nicolás Maduro did not fundamentally alter these dynamics. The rapid repositioning of internal actors demonstrated that the governing system was not centred on a single leader but on a broader structure characterized by fragmented authority and elite survival.

Hemispheric insecurity can also be understood through the concept of moral hazard. When actors do not bear the full consequences of their actions, they are more likely to pursue strategies that shift risk onto others. In the context of Latin American security, powerful actors, most notably the United States, can employ sanctions, coercive diplomacy, or intervention while absorbing only a portion of the downstream consequences. The broader costs of these actions, including migration pressures, instability, and criminal spillovers, are frequently borne by weaker states across the region. The removal of Maduro, for example, eliminated a hostile political actor and reduced the influence of external powers such as China, Iran, and Russia, yet left intact many of the structural drivers of instability, including corruption, entrenched criminal networks, and mass

displacement. As a result, while security gains may be concentrated where decisions are made, the burdens of insecurity continue to diffuse across neighbouring states such as Colombia and Peru, as well as throughout the Caribbean.

Arctic Security, Sovereignty, and the Strategic Consequences of US Policy

Discussion examined the application of hemispheric security principles in the Arctic, focusing on historical cooperation between the United States, Canada, and Denmark and the strategic implications of recent policy shifts. Concerns over US encroachment on Canadian Arctic sovereignty have long shaped Canadian political debate, particularly during the Second World War and the early Cold War, when the United States established military bases across the Canadian North. Despite these anxieties, historical assessments generally characterize American behaviour as cooperative. US forces established installations for continental defence, withdrew when appropriate, and later formalized collaboration through agreements such as aerospace defence arrangements in which the United States assumed the majority of the financial burden while Canada benefited strategically. With the exception of recurring disputes over the legal status of the Northwest Passage, US actions largely reinforced cooperative defence structures rather than undermining Canadian sovereignty.

A similar pattern appeared in Greenland during the Second World War and the early Cold War. Although Canada initially considered occupying Greenland and Iceland to prevent German control, the United States assumed responsibility for the occupation of Greenland while Canada briefly maintained a presence in Iceland. American forces ultimately withdrew after the war, but the strategic significance of the Arctic intensified with the advent of nuclear weapons and long-range delivery systems. As the Arctic became a key trajectory for intercontinental bombers and later ballistic missiles, U.S. military infrastructure in Greenland expanded. Denmark, a founding member of NATO, accepted a broad U.S. security presence under bilateral agreements that permitted extensive American activity on the island, including the establishment of major installations such as the Thule Air Base. Even serious incidents, such as the 1968 crash of a U.S. B-52 carrying nuclear weapons near Greenland, produced limited diplomatic confrontation, reflecting the broader stability of the security relationship.

Over time, Arctic defence became integrated into a wider network of allied cooperation linking NORAD, NATO, and maritime defence structures in the North Atlantic. Surveillance systems in Canada and Greenland were complemented by NATO naval operations designed to control critical maritime routes, particularly the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom (GIUK) gap. However, recent shifts in military capability and alliance coordination have generated new

concerns. NATO operations increasingly emphasize renewed anti-submarine warfare training as allied states attempt to compensate for declining U.S. naval capacity in certain areas. Within this strategic context, recent proposals to assert direct US control over Greenland have generated significant uncertainty. While earlier cooperation allowed the United States to expand infrastructure and integrate Arctic facilities into emerging missile-defence architectures, political rhetoric surrounding territorial acquisition has strained longstanding alliances. The resulting uncertainty has begun to affect defence planning among allied states. Canada is reassessing procurement decisions related to advanced fighter aircraft, while Denmark has debated adjustments to its own defence commitments. These developments risk undermining the integrated defence structures that have historically governed Arctic security. The broader implication is that shifts in US policy may weaken the cooperative frameworks that have structured North American and North Atlantic defence since the Cold War. Disruptions to NORAD coordination, NATO maritime operations, and allied procurement decisions could reduce the effectiveness of collective surveillance and deterrence systems in the Arctic. In strategic terms, such fragmentation may ultimately create opportunities for rival powers, particularly Russia, to expand their operational freedom in the region.

Concluding Remarks

The panel posed the question, *Whose hemisphere is this?*, an inquiry into Canada's position within a shifting international order. The discussion made clear that this order is not static; it is evolving in ways that raise profound questions about sovereignty, security and the rules-based order.

For much of its history, Canada has taken comfort in the stability of its borders and in the assumption that the United States, its closest neighbour, posed no territorial threat. The world's longest 'undefended' border symbolized a durable trust rooted in shared democratic values and economic interdependence. Yet, recent developments in global politics and within North America itself have unsettled those assumptions.

Attention is once again turning to Canada's northern frontier, an area once viewed as remote and strategically negligible. As international competition intensifies in the Arctic, sovereignty there has become central to national security. At the same time, Canada must reconsider its broader hemispheric relationships. For generations, Canada stood apart from the interventions that defined US engagement in Latin America, assuming the Monroe Doctrine applied only to the southern hemisphere. This perception no longer holds. The evolving Monroe, or *Donroe,* doctrine and the ambiguity of current US defence strategies establish that hemispheric dynamics now blur traditional boundaries of influence and concern.

American foreign policy appears caught between traces of isolationism, personalized politics and renewed assertiveness abroad, an approach that complicates cooperative security efforts. What has been lost in this process is the element of trust among nations, a foundation that is fragile once broken and difficult to rebuild.

For Canada, the challenge ahead is to define its place within the Western Hemisphere, not merely in relation to the United States, but in engagement with the broader region. Understanding the security and institutional risks facing Latin American partners is essential. Hemispheric insecurity arises not from isolated governance failures but from interconnected regional dynamics, where unresolved risks shift rather than disappear. Recognizing weaker states as systems with their own internal logic, rather than deficient versions of stronger ones, will be key to building a more stable, cooperative future for the hemisphere as a whole.