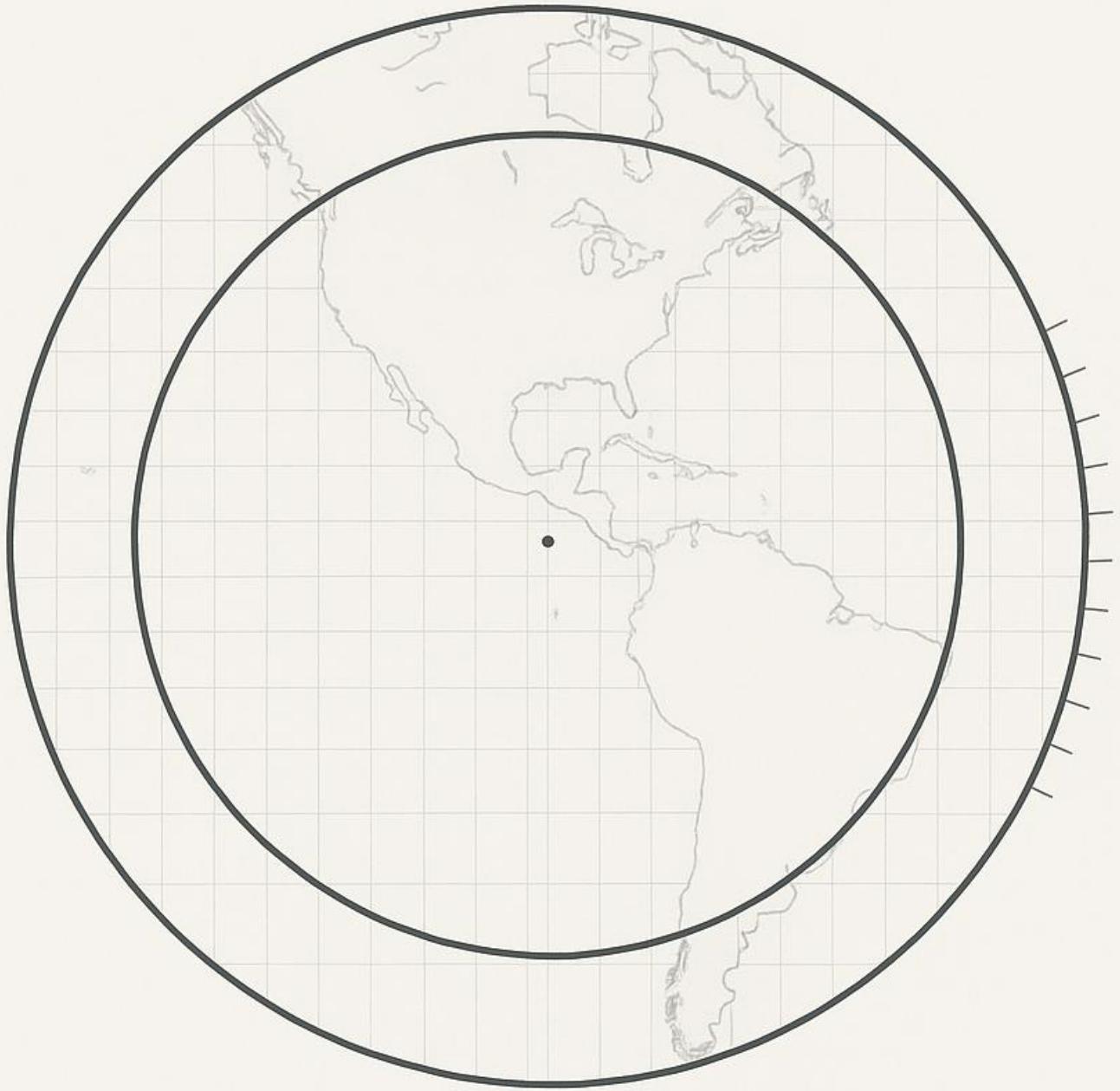




InsightForward



NEW U.S. DEFENSE STRATEGY

NEW U.S. DEFENSE POLICY: HOMELAND FIRST, HEMISPHERE NEXT

The emerging U.S. defense review guided by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Elbridge Colby marks an important shift in American strategic orientation. Where the Indo-Pacific once stood at the center of U.S. defense priorities, the emphasis now retracts toward the Western Hemisphere and a quasi-revival of the Monroe Doctrine. Rooted in realist geopolitical thinking, this recalibration suggests explicit prioritization of homeland security and hemispheric dominance, which has significant consequences for America's global posture.

The draft 2025 National Defense Strategy, currently [under consideration](#) by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, signifies a conscious retreat from global forward engagement in favor of domestic and regional missions. The Pentagon is expanding operations along the southern border, deploying National Guard personnel for domestic law enforcement support, and deploying naval and air assets to the Caribbean to interdict drug trafficking and criminal networks. Essentially, the U.S. is [reprioritizing](#) its military resources to defend its own territory and its immediate neighborhood.

This inward shift reflects a broader strategic philosophy that America must secure its “home base” before committing to distant theaters. As a result, Europe and the Indo-Pacific are likely to face the withdrawal or reallocation of U.S. forces. NATO allies are [being pressed](#) to carry a greater share of the burden in Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic region, and longstanding programs like the Baltic Security Initiative are experiencing funding cuts.

A REALIST “PRIORITIZER”

Elbridge Colby embodies a realist strategic logic. As Undersecretary for Policy, Colby is tasked with crafting, coordinating, and steering U.S. defense strategy. His role empowers him to impose a coherent but uncompromising vision that emphasizes strategic prioritization over global ubiquity. Positioned at the center of strategy-making, he leverages institutional levers like the Global Posture Review and the Air and Missile Defense Review to shape U.S. military presence and posture abroad.

Acknowledged as a “[China hawk](#),” Colby has consistently argued that the People's Republic of China represents the United States' principal strategic threat and that resources should be concentrated in the Indo-Pacific even if it means scaling back elsewhere. His prior contribution to the 2018 National Defense Strategy anchored U.S. defense planning around deterring China's rise and demanded increased burden-sharing from allies. In his capacity as policy chief, Colby also authored a June 2025 memo that temporarily paused arms shipments to Ukraine, emphasizing the need to preserve U.S. stockpiles for potential China contingencies. Despite his strong China focus, Colby's current leadership of the 2025 strategy suggests a startling pivot for invoking national defense to justify a retraction, not expansion. Under his guidance, U.S. forces and strategy appear to withdraw from Europe and other theaters to refocus on the Western Hemisphere, yet still framed as securing a more defensible, prioritized posture.

Colby's strategy echoes the historical contours of the Monroe Doctrine: preventing external great power influence in the Western Hemisphere. However, unlike the classic 19th- and early 20th-century formulation, the contemporary revival isn't concerned with European colonization. Rather, it's about constraining the geometric alliance of "[DragonBear](#)" (China and Russia) from penetrating Latin America. The U.S. is reinforcing its regional dominance, deploying forces to stem illicit flows and preempt threats from great-power rivals. Still, this is more akin to the expansionist [Roosevelt Corollary](#), a heavier assertion of U.S. interventionist privilege, than to Monroe's original defensive posturing (take for example the [use of power](#) and [threats](#) against Venezuela in early September). Under Colby, the U.S. is not only denying foreign encroachment but actively policing the hemisphere to preserve its strategic primacy.

IMPLICATIONS AND TENSIONS

This potentially new retrenchment strategy offers a sense of internal coherence and strategic discipline but carries significant geopolitical trade-offs. At its core, the logic is straightforward. The United States faces finite resources, growing great-power competition, and mounting domestic vulnerabilities. Concentrating on defending the homeland and securing the Western Hemisphere reduces the risk of overstretch and preserves strength for critical contingencies. However, this reallocation of U.S. priorities away from Europe and parts of the Indo-Pacific risks signaling strategic abdication to allies and adversaries alike. The challenge lies in balancing strategic prioritization with the maintenance of credible deterrence across multiple theaters.

For NATO and Indo-Pacific partners, the pivot is a test of trust and alignment. European allies, particularly the Baltic states, Poland, and frontline NATO members, depend heavily on U.S. intelligence, logistics, and military infrastructure. While Colby insists that allies must "step up," the reality is that many lack the capacity to rapidly replace American power, especially given the potential scaling back of Baltic Security Initiative funding and reductions in U.S. forward-deployed forces. In Asia, questions loom over Washington's long-term commitment to AUKUS, submarine deployments, and broader Indo-Pacific force posture. It is likely that this will accelerate the deepening anxieties about American reliability and could accelerate allied hedging behaviors.

The shift also alters the geopolitical signaling landscape in ways that could embolden U.S. rivals. Russia and China, observing a U.S. pivot inward, will likely exploit perceived vacuums in Europe and the Indo-Pacific. For Moscow, reduced American engagement in Eastern Europe creates openings to consolidate influence in Ukraine and pressure NATO's eastern flank. For Beijing, doubts about U.S. staying power could weaken deterrence across the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea. Meanwhile, the renewed focus on Latin America and the Caribbean aims to block the strategic encroachment of the "DragonBear" axis. Yet this posture risks alienating regional partners who may view U.S. assertiveness as neocolonial, potentially undermining Washington's ability to build cooperative coalitions in its own hemisphere.

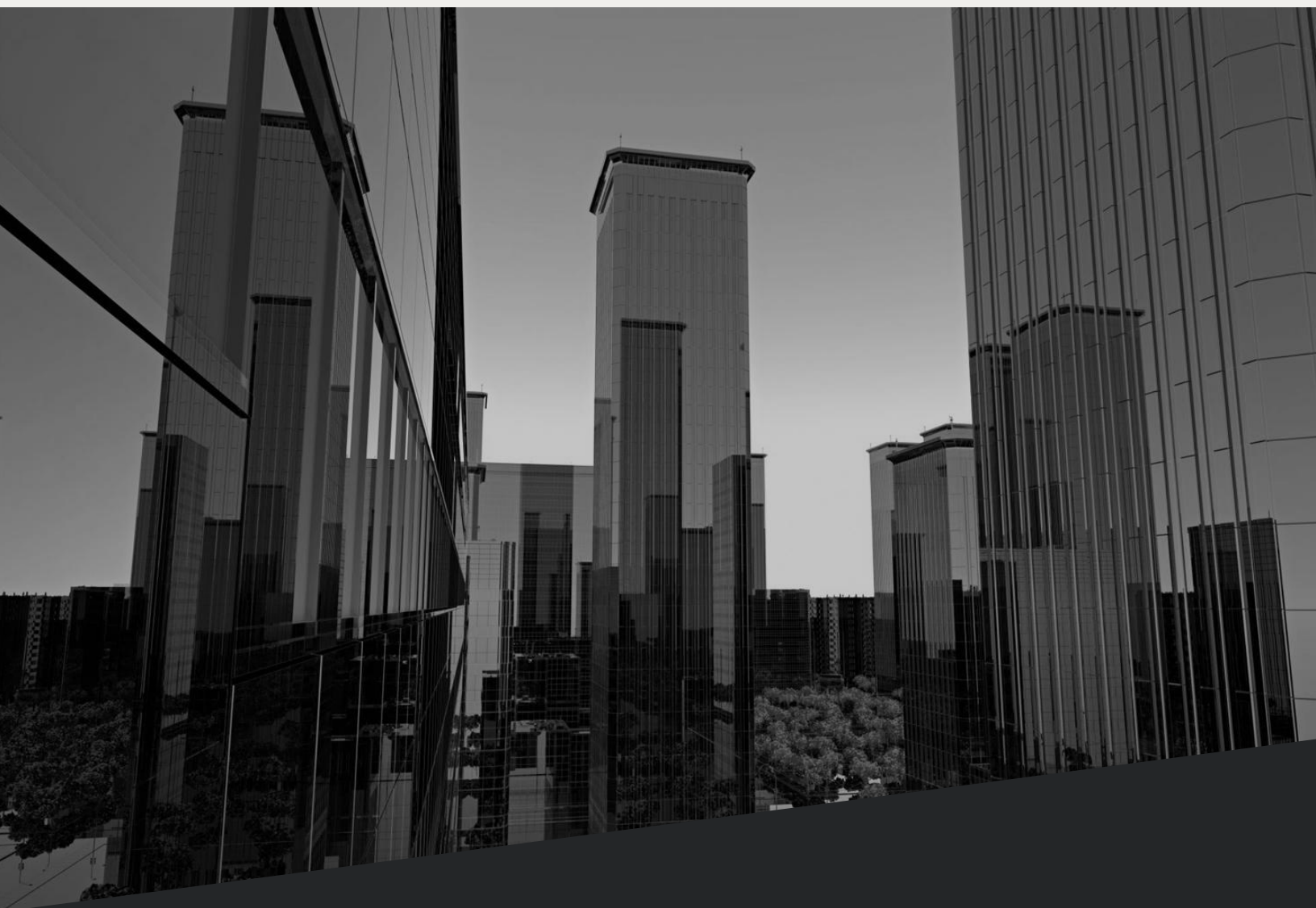
Colby's framework reflects a realist orthodoxy that prizes hard-power prioritization and strategic autonomy over expansive global commitments. From this perspective, securing the homeland and near abroad ensures that American power is applied where it matters most, avoiding diffusion across endless peripheral engagements. Nevertheless, critics (including other realists) argue that today's security environment is too

interconnected for a purely regional defense strategy. Deterrence in Europe and Asia is not compartmentalized; a perceived U.S. retreat in one theater can cascade into destabilization elsewhere, accelerating revisionist adventurism and diminishing Washington's credibility as the guarantor of the rules-based order.

Finally, the Colby-led defense review deepens existing domestic political divides. Within the Trump administration, the strategy aligns with the "America First" wing's embrace of restrained internationalism, championed by figures like JD Vance and Robert O'Brien, but it clashes with more traditional Republican hawks and centrist Democrats who advocate sustained U.S. leadership abroad. This schism will likely complicate defense budgeting, NATO coordination, and future congressional authorizations. Colby's vision seeks to impose a sharp hierarchy of priorities, but the political environment surrounding it is anything but unified, a factor that could constrain the strategy's execution and longevity.

CONCLUSION

Elbridge Colby's stewardship of the 2025 U.S. defense review reflects a shift from global presence to strategic containment of threats closer to home, a modern, muscular embodiment of the Monroe Doctrine. Rooted in realism, his policy seeks to allocate scarce military resources toward the homeland and nearby periphery, demanding allies assume greater responsibility while preserving U.S. strength through concentration. The gravity of this approach lies in its clarity and intellectual coherence, but it carries undeniable geopolitical risks, straining alliances, amplifying adversarial opportunities, and redefining America's role in the world.



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