

Trump can redraw the Western Hemisphere

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President Trump's removal of Nicolas Maduro from power in Venezuela cements his status as a transformative foreign policy leader.

With the momentum gained from the ouster, Mr. Trump has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reshape U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere and present future administrations with a more favorable geopolitical landscape in the region that matters most to Americans.

In Mr. Trump's recent National Security Strategy, the administration makes clear that the hemisphere, tied directly to the defense of the U.S., is the paramount national interest after decades of distraction in the Middle East. The Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine — stating that the influence of extra-hemispheric powers in the hemisphere is a direct threat to U.S. security — demonstrated its first true application with Mr. Maduro's capture.

Given the dictator's ties to China, Iran and Russia, his removal represents a reversal of fortune for outside powers in the hemisphere. To press the American advantage post-Maduro, the administration should start by rewriting the definition of the hemisphere. U.S. interest is primacy in the hemisphere, not in "Latin America" or Central and South America. The broadest definition possible of the hemisphere is appropriate to the threats now facing us, including a China that is war-gaming combat operations in the hemisphere and sailing submarines deep into the Arctic.

The U.S. should officially state that the hemisphere (and therefore the Trump Corollary) stretches from the Aleutian Islands to Greenland and from the North American Arctic to Antarctica. With regular Chinese and Russian naval patrols in Alaskan waters and Beijing's declaration of itself as a "near Arctic power," this definition would formally align U.S. strategic orientation with the reality of great power rivalry.

As the administration undertakes an overdue consolidation of Defense Department combatant commands, combining U.S. Northern and Southern commands into a "Western Hemisphere Command" would allocate

attention and resources to the president's priorities in a coherent manner.

The Defense Department already uses this construct for the assistant secretary for homeland defense and hemispheric affairs. The State Department and the National

Security Council could follow suit by consolidating all hemispheric-focused activities into their Western Hemisphere bureau or directorate, respectively.

Additionally, in keeping with the unique role of Greenland in U.S. strategic orientation and the administration's commitment to its closer integration with the U.S., liaison with the island should be moved to the Office of Insular Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

Given the Interior Department's experience in administering U.S. territories and handling Indigenous matters, the transfer would bureaucratically cement U.S. focus on Greenland's long-term relationship with the U.S.

Such bureaucratic adjustments must be matched by new regional diplomatic, military and economic resources. Militarily, as the U.S. retrenches from bases in Europe and the Middle East, Washington can begin conversations to expand U.S. military presence in the hemisphere.

Many Venezuela-focused assets were based in Puerto Rico, but the U.S. footprint there isn't sufficient to project power and undertake deterrence in the Caribbean. The naval base at Roosevelt Roads, reopened only in November, could expand to house Navy surface vessels and Coast Guard cutters. A permanent Air Force fighter presence on the island would enhance power projection, as would Navy patrol aircraft and rotational Army and Marine units. The Coast Guard station in the U.S. Virgin Islands could be expanded to include more capable vessels and air assets.

In addition, the U.S. should better engage likeminded partners to improve its regional posture. The administration's desire to redeploy forces from elsewhere offers a prime opportunity for this adjustment. El Salvador, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana and several Caribbean islands could provide facilities for

rotational or permanent U.S. presence. A robust presence would contribute to counternarcotics, intelligence and deterrence missions.

With politically aligned governments now in power in Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina, the U.S. can also further enhance military-to-military cooperation in countries too long abandoned to Beijing's influence.

A proactive approach to U.S. military presence is crucial as the Trump administration looks to counter Chinese influence over the Panama Canal and reclaim U.S. influence over operations and the future of Greenland. Costa Rica currently allows U.S. access to its territory on a case-by-case basis. A formalized agreement with San Jose that permits rotational or permanent U.S. forces would help protect approaches to the canal. Under

the 1951 Greenland Defense Agreement, the U.S. has wide latitude to request military access. While the administration works toward a political solution to Greenland's status, the Defense Department should substantially increase its requests for permanent U.S. assets in Greenland for maritime domain awareness, anti-submarine warfare and Arctic training.

A revived Pan-Americanism under U.S. regional leadership could turn the Western Hemisphere into an economically vibrant and secure citadel.

As Mr. Trump confronts a new Venezuela, anti-American actors in Havana and Managua, lawless cartels in Mexico and Chinese ambitions from the High North to the South Pole, now is the time to think broadly and strategically about the U.S. presence in the region that matters most to U.S. security. What he leaves in place could cement American hemispheric dominance for generations.

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