

Victor Davis Hanson: Trump's Jacksonian Foreign Policy (With a Twist)

[Victor Davis Hanson](#)

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Editor's note: This is a lightly edited transcript of today's video from Daily Signal Senior Contributor Victor Davis Hanson.

Hello, this is Victor Davis Hanson for The Daily Signal. In the past, I've characterized as, Walter Russell Mead, most famously [said], that Trump's [foreign policy](#) is neither interventionist, surely not nation building, nor is it isolationist, as the Left accuses. It was something called Jacksonian. That is, "no better friend, no worse enemy." "Don't tread on me."

At various times if people took advantage of the United States' desire to live in peace, and they started to push their luck, then we would hit them, overwhelmingly. Sort of what we saw with the two Americans that were tragically killed in Syria. Then there was an overwhelming retaliation.

But I think there's a quirk to Jacksonianism, a subset. And I would call the Trump Foreign Policy, the Vise Policy. V-I-S-E. Like a vise, that you clamp down on something. By that, I mean, rather than intervene or even use kinetic force, he has another alternative when he sees a renegade country.

Most famously, we saw Iran, that when he came into office, the first thing he did was get back out of the Iran Deal, put back the sanctions, support Israel's effort to retaliate against Iran.

Although he did [take out the nuclear facilities](#), that was an act that he felt he had no choice, because Iran was reaching a point where they'd have a nuclear weapon. But up until then, he had almost bankrupt, again, by squeezing the Iran economy at no cost to the United States.

We see that much better with Venezuela and the rogue Maduro government. The illegitimate government, that throughout the last elections, in which [Nicolas] Maduro lost, and has been sending shiploads of narcotics to the United States.

It's using embargoed oil tankers to sell sanctioned oil to Cuba, to China, and, more or less, opened up its jails and mental institutions and sent thousands of people, in spite, to the United States.

So, Trump is now reestablishing the Monroe Doctrine. Remember, Secretary of State John Kerry said that the Monroe Doctrine was pretty much ossified, calcified. Trump has reinstated it. But with a vise policy.

So, sanctions on Maduro. He's not going to have any [income through narco sales](#). We're blowing up narco terrorist shipments on the high seas. He uses that money to bribe officers, bribe the media, bribe the opposition, to stay in power illegitimately. And then, in addition to that, he'll have no oil income. Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world. So, he has a limitless supply of credit and cash. But not if he can't get it to somewhere.

And, in the Western hemisphere, Trump is showing the world that he just almost automatically reestablished the Monroe Doctrine. What is China going to do? They may say they have a blue-water Navy. They may say they're catching up. But they're not there yet. And they have no ability to transmit power, in the Western hemisphere, among our shores.

So, Maduro is in a vise. And we're squeezing it down, at no cost to us. Is Trump going to invade? I doubt it. Is he going to bomb? I doubt it. I think he's just slowly going to intimidate Maduro so people within the Venezuelan hierarchy, both legitimate opponents and opportunistic supporters, who feel that he's a bad investment. And they will throw him out.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Since this commentary was recorded, President Donald Trump did launch a military operation to seize Nicolas Maduro so he could face criminal charges in the United States. What assistance the U.S. had from "legitimate opponents and opportunistic supporters" within Venezuela has not been made known.

The same thing is [true of Cuba](#). We didn't really know how to deal with Cuba. Since 1959, we've had embargoes. Sometimes they're liquid. Sometimes they're fluid. They don't really work. But, more or less, the Castro-ite government in Cuba is an existential enemy of the United States.

We have a lot of people who go there and visit. But the country has never worked. It's impoverished. And it's dependent wholly on the legacy of Hugo Chavez and now Maduro, to give them cheap oil. If they don't get cheap oil, and what do I mean by that?

If Maduro cannot put embargoed oil on sanctioned tankers and get to Cuba, then Cuba's going to have no ability to distill gasoline, nor will it have energy. And that's exactly what is happening. The Cuban economy is in a Trump vise.

Are we going to bomb Cuba? No. Are we going to have a Bay of Pigs standoff or invasion? No. Are we going to have a Cuban missile crisis with China? No. We're going to have a [Trump vise](#). And it's going to squeeze.

Does this work all the time? No. I mean, it doesn't work in the case of a full-fledged war, like the Ukraine War or the Middle East, sometimes.

But with other powers in our vicinity or that we have leverage over, we're going to start to squeeze them, to bring back legitimate government, pro-American governments, and stability for the entire Western hemisphere. And most importantly, a chance for their citizenry to have a normal life.

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