The Trump Military Doctrine 2.0 Against Terrorism and Rogue States - Airpower/COIN/Regional Power

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In recent hours, Donald Trump's announcement of the start of “major combat operations” in Iran has made explicit a strategic framework that was already taking shape: a **radically pragmatic** doctrine, focused on reducing the political and human attrition of “long wars” and achieving decisive effects **without getting bogged down** in extensive ground campaigns.

This course of action combines three operational pillars (airpower projected by *Carrier Strike Groups* - CSG, “indirect” counter-insurgency, special forces) and a political-strategic framework (regional allies and a negotiated “exit path”). The lexicon used by the administration—including the term **“rough states”** circulated in the US political debate—describes regimes perceived as aggressive, destabilizing, and difficult to deter with classic tools.

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1) First Pillar: Airpower and Carrier Strike Groups

The most evident component is the centrality of **long-range air power** (and stand-off) projected also by *Carrier Strike Groups*, CSG key tools of the doctrine, because they allow to **project surgical power** in any theater without relying on vulnerable land bases or complex political authorizations. **Multidomain Fortresses** (aircraft carriers, fighter/strike, electronic warfare, escort units, air and missile defense, anti-submarine capabilities, amphibious and special forces, logistics) capable of striking **A2AD threat, strategic infrastructure, command-control and Very Long Range missiles** of the adversary, reducing the exposure of US forces to the attrition of the Land Domain.

In the speech on Iran, Trump set the action in terms of **denial of capabilities** (missiles, missile industry, navy) and prevention of threats deemed existential—especially nuclear-related—with a deliberately simple and repeated message: “they will never have a nuclear weapon”.
The previous episode of 2025—**Operation Midnight Hammer**, with attacks on Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan—is often presented as proof of concept: hitting “hard” targets with elite means (B-2, penetrating munitions, cruise), seeking to achieve a strategic result without occupation.

The underlying logic: if the adversary benefits from bogging you down on the ground, then the doctrine aims to **take away the type of war they prefer**, instead imposing a long-range, precision, technological superiority, and operational tempo war.

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2) Second Pillar: “Reversed Counter-Insurgency” (the People Against the Regime)

Here the classic COIN doctrine is evolved to **population-centric in objectives**, with an **overwatch from above**: the United States leads with air superiority, intelligence, precision strike, and coercive pressure, conducted with large forces on the ground. The idea is: **you are not doing nation-building**, but you create the conditions for the adversary's **political center** to lose control and legitimacy, while the population becomes the **Agent of Change**.

This is clearly evident in Trump's direct appeal to Iranians: stay sheltered during the air campaign and then “take control” of the government, with an explicit framing of a “historical window” to overthrow the ruling elite.
It is a narrative consistent with labeling Iran as a sponsor of terrorism and with the declared goal of targeting not only military capabilities but **power architectures** that fuel proxies and militias in the region.

3) Third Pillar: Special Forces for “Protected” Surgical Strikes from the Sky

The third element is the use of **SOF (Special Operations Forces)** as a selective tool: rapid, targeted, high-impact actions, with ISR coverage and air power for extraction and protection. The model is that of **decapitation/neutralization of critical nodes**, targeting high-value objectives or key networks—what in doctrine would be called “center of gravity”, or at least

decisive nodes of the adversary's system.

In Venezuela, for example, the US operation in January 2026 is described by authoritative sources as an intervention that led to the **capture of Nicolás Maduro** and the control/restructuring of economic levers (primarily oil), with an immediate diplomatic and financial tail.
Beyond the political judgment, it is a case that illustrates the idea “**raid + pressure + outcome**” instead of a prolonged occupation campaign.

4) Regional Framework: Let Regional Allies Act, While Washington Dominates Sky and Intelligence

Another characteristic is the use of a **regional power policy**: allies or partners are **incentivized** (or allowed to act) in the land domain, while the United States provides air umbrella, intelligence, precision strike capabilities, logistics, and deterrence.

In recent public debate, this scheme is often recalled by examples such as:

- **Israel** against Hamas/Hezbollah (land and proximity dimension, with a context of deterrence and variable external supports).
- **Pakistan** (perhaps...) regarding the Afghan quadrant (cross-border pressure, proxy dynamics, and border security).
- **Syria**, a coalition of rebels led by the group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) toppled the Assad regime through a lightning 11-day offensive, which saw the collapse of government defenses and the rapid conquest of Aleppo and Damascus.

The point is not the equivalence of contexts (very different), but the **principle**: Washington seeks to avoid the “trap” of massive infantry presence, transferring part of the political-military cost of the ground to those who are geographically and strategically more exposed.

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5) The Negotiated “Exit Path”: Escalation with a Slightly Open Door

A recurring feature—at least in rhetoric—is offering an **exit ramp**: ultimatums, messages of immunity/amnesty, possibility of agreement “before it's too late”. In the speech on Iran, Trump combines maximum threat with an explicit invitation to the surrender of armed apparatuses (“lay down your arms… immunity”) and with reference to attempts at agreement that then failed.

This structure serves two purposes: (1) **legitimize the use of force** as a “last resort”; (2) **create fractures in the adversary block** (military elites, internal security, technocracy).

Three Cases in Sequence: Syria “Contained”, Venezuela “Converted”, Iran “Ongoing”

- **Syria**: more than “resolved”, the dossier appears as an unstable equilibrium, where the risk is that local tensions and regional entanglements reopen cycles of violence. Recent analyses highlight fragilities and the possibility of reigniting the conflict.
- **Venezuela**: the action of January 2026 and the immediate developments (oil export finance, legal disputes, revenue management) show a “quick” result compared to the standards of stabilization wars.
- **Iran**: we are in the most dangerous phase, because the Iranian response and regional escalation are already part of the news of these hours (missiles towards Israel and attacks

on US bases in the region, according to various reconstructions).

Conclusion: A “Remote” Power Doctrine Betting on the Collapse of the Adversary's Political Center

In the speech on Iran, Trump summarizes the essence of this posture: **crush military and coercive capabilities from above**, break regional networks, and simultaneously speak **to the population** as the final recipient of change.

The challenge now is to verify if the doctrine truly works in the most complex case: Iran, where the regime's resilience, retaliation capability, and risk of regional war test the entire framework.