

Larry Johnson: Will Trump Declare Victory Against Iran & Walk Away Without a Nuclear Deal?

Larry Johnson is a former CIA intelligence analyst who also worked at the U.S. State Department's Office of Counterterrorism. Read Larry Johnson's Sonar21: <https://sonar21.com/> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Buy Diesen merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. Larry Johnson joins us today, a former CIA analyst and also a former employee at the U.S. State Department's Office of Counterterrorism. And I would also ask our viewers to check out his work on Sonar 21. And I have left a link to it in the description. So, yeah, it's always great to have you back, Larry. Thank you.

#Larry Johnson

Thanks, Glenn. I always appreciate the invitation, my friend.

#Glenn

So I see now that Trump argues that not only is the Strait of Hormuz wide open, but it's also under U.S. control. I'm not sure. I guess everyone spins these days, but this is starting to be a bit over the top. But on a different note, we see the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Scott Bessent, arguing that the Strait of Hormuz itself will be irrelevant in two years, as all oil will be rerouted through pipelines. I guess, how feasible is this? And I guess, what is it not accounting for? But also, just to widen the question a bit more, what is the point of this statement? Because is this intended to pretend the Strait of Hormuz is not significant anymore? Does that make it easier for the U.S. to pull away? Or what should we make of this?

#Larry Johnson

Well, it'd be one thing if we were simply observing Donald Trump's detachment from reality. You know, there have been some funny memes created out of this over the last couple of months.

Remember the one where he's lying on a psychiatrist's couch, and the psychiatrist is sitting there talking to him? And at this time, Trump was claiming that he was talking to the Iranians. And the psychiatrist says to him, "Mr. President, these Iranians that you're talking to, are they here in the room with us now?" Implying that he's dealing with mythical, fantastical personalities that don't exist. Now he says, "Oh, the Strait of Hormuz is wide open. We control it."

Okay, well, if it's open and you control it, why is there a battle with Iran? I mean, there shouldn't be any. Why are you blockading Iran? Is that for some other reason? Because, you know, ostensibly, initially, you said you were blockading Iran because they were shutting down the Strait of Hormuz. Now, like I said, it'd be one thing if it was just Donald Trump off into this delusional nonsense. But then Scott Bessent weighs in. Now, as Secretary of the Treasury, you would think he'd be fully briefed on the economic, let's call them, parameters that govern the Persian Gulf. Yes, 20 to 25 percent of the world's supply of oil comes out of the Persian Gulf.

Significant. But that's not all. You've got liquid natural gas, urea, sulfur, and helium, all critical commodity inputs into the industrial process around the world. None of those can be transported via pipeline. Impossible. So it's like, here's Bessent saying, "Yeah, only one-fifth of what we're— as long as we're shipping the oil around, we don't care about that other stuff." And people say, "Well, why do we care about helium, for example?" Helium is— I'm updating Ambrose Bierce, a Civil War veteran from the 19th century in the United States, who is a journalist renowned for his very acerbic, sort of misanthropic view of humanity.

And he said war was God's way of teaching Americans geography. Well, out of this war, I've now learned about gas, LNG, urea, sulfur, helium, oil, sweet crude, sour crude. And with helium, I didn't realize it. It's essential for making not only computer chips, but sealing hard drives on computers. And as a result of this, and here was Qatar, who was producing like 40%—others say 30%, but the numbers I think are more accurate were 40%—of the world's supply of helium. That gets cut off. All of a sudden, the people making computer chips and hard drives and MRI machinery, they've got to pay more, and the prices of all that starts going up dramatically.

So again, it gets back with Bessent. Only he's focused on the oil, and he's ignoring urea and sulfur as well, which are critical for fertilizer, among other things. And sulfur plays a big role in other industrial processes. So it's like, what are you people thinking? I think they actually believe they can blockade Iran for another year or two, and then Iran's going to surrender. Tell you what, the Western economy will not survive that long. What they're looking at right now is, we are in the midst of a global recession. It's just that the numbers that are produced, sometimes it takes a couple of months. They lag two or three months. By the time we get those numbers, we're going to be on the cusp of a depression, not just a recession.

#Glenn

I read a report that Washington might switch from the military actions to economic pressure. But as you point out, the economic pressures are mounting on the United States and its allies as well, indeed the entire global economy. So I'm not sure if there's time for this kind of prolonged economic pressure either. And also, the additional pressure also entails use of the military, for example, through this blockade. So it's going to be hard to pull through with that plan. But that kind of goes back to what I was thinking. That is, there are not many good options anymore for the United States here. That is, there's no convincing military option, and the path to peace now must, to some extent, go through the MOU. But this is now, I think, for Trump, too painful.

I mean, he was the one who was blasting Obama for years for the JCPOA, which now looks like a dream deal, and especially for Obama unfreezing some of Iran's assets. Well, if Trump's going to go with peace here, he's going to have to end the sanctions. It's about \$300 billion in reconstruction for Iran. He has to end all the wars against Iranian allies. So there's no war option, and the peace also seems too difficult for Trump to swallow, especially before the election. So is there a third option, though, just for the U.S. to walk away? Because when I heard Scott Bessent pointing out, you know, who cares about the Strait of Hormuz? This is what I would expect to hear if one is preparing to walk away again. It could be other reasons. But do you think there's a possibility Trump could just do what he did with Yemen, that is, declare victory over Iran and go home without an actual deal?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, no, absolutely. I do think that is at least one of the options on the table, that he'll just declare victory and walk away. Now, he received some encouragement on that front from James Carafano, a senior official at the Heritage Foundation, which is one of the preeminent Washington think tanks, or so-called think tanks. And he wrote this piece praising Trump for his victory over Iran. So there, hey, you've won. Congratulations. And then Trump gets to declare victory and walk away. The problem with that is the United States is going to have to lift the blockade that it has now imposed upon Iran.

I don't think it's—the United States doesn't have enough ships to do 100% closure, but it does have enough that it can interfere with some of the Iranian oil coming out of the Gulf. And so here, the United States, ironically, by blocking the flow of Iranian oil from the Gulf, is exacerbating a global shortage of oil, particularly this oil that's high in sulfur, called sour crude, that comes out of the Persian Gulf and comes out of Iran. The reason that's so important is when you set up an oil refinery, you've got to make a decision at the outset: are we going to use this refinery to refine sour crude or sweet crude?

Because depending on your answer determines how you actually build that refinery. And so the major refineries right now are in four areas of the globe: in the Gulf Coast of the United States, Gulf of Mexico, Gulf of America, in India, in China, and then in Japan and South Korea. Now, what makes

Japan and South Korea so critical is they get 90% of their oil from the Persian Gulf. For India and China, it's about 50%. China is able to make up that 50% easily with oil from Russia, as well as India to a lesser extent, but it's still not in a critical phase.

But that said, the fact that you've got this cutoff of supply, it wasn't like Russia or some other country could just boost production and replace that. That didn't happen. So that means diesel and aviation fuel that come out of the middle distillates of that sour crude, we've got a shortage, a global shortage of diesel and aviation fuel. And with each passing week, that shortage grows more acute. The United States, up to this point, has tried to mitigate some of that shock by drawing down its Strategic Petroleum Reserve, as have other countries, particularly Japan. But those reserves are running out around the globe.

And in fact, the United States is approaching a very critical level where, if it tries to draw any more out, it could collapse the salt caverns that have been used for storing the oil. Because to get the oil out, you pump water into these salt caverns. And, you know, when you mix water with salt, salt dissolves. So, you know, there's some real complexities here. And then adding to this is, even if the Strait of Hormuz is wide open tomorrow, that any ship can come and go at ease, at its pleasure, the damage that has been done to the oil terminals, the LNG terminals, the processing facilities, the petrochemical plants is so significant that the personnel that normally would be there to do the repair and/or maintenance on this equipment, they're U.S. contractors.

All those contractors have bailed out of the area because it was too damn dangerous. And the warehouses where they had their repair equipment, replacement parts stored, those have been destroyed. So even if you get back in and you say, okay, well, let's start repairing, what I'm saying is we're looking at months, and potentially a year or longer, before anything approaching normal flow is restored. So that means this whole negative economic pressure of the shortages—shortages of diesel, aviation fuel, LNG, urea, sulfur, and helium—that's going to persist. And that will continue to have a negative, depressing effect on the global economy, not just one country.

#Glenn

I'm thinking, though, that if the U.S. decides now to just walk away—that is, accept that they will leave the Strait of Hormuz with the Iranians—it would be bad. But again, it wouldn't be so bad if the Iranians allow it to stay open, that is, international commerce can continue, the oil and other resources can come out. However, if Trump decides he wants to walk away from this but still keep some of the blockade on for pressure on Iran, it seems unlikely that the situation would change at all, because any blockade is an act of war, which would then necessitate an Iranian retaliation. So you would again continue more or less what you see now, but with lower intensity. So if the U.S. is to walk away, it also needs the Iranians to open up the Strait of Hormuz. But the Iranians have made it clear that the United States must behave before they will open the Strait of Hormuz. Is that the same as implementing the MOU, or how do you interpret good behavior?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, no, actually it's an extension of the MOU, or let's call it an updating of the MOU. Now, I've seen it reported. I can't quite verify it, but my understanding is that in the early days of the shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz, China made a behind-the-scenes deal with the United States not to go out and try to buy oil on the global market in order to reduce price pressure on that. Because if China had done that, it would have spiked the pressure. But then, after the United States walked away from the MOU, China said, "Well, screw that." And so China's been out buying up oil, which is leading to pressure for it to go up. So the United States faces that challenge.

It is, from the Iranian standpoint... They've gone back and said, look, if the United States wants to do this again, it's going to have to meet the following conditions: stop threatening us; withdraw; get Israel to stop the war in Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Yemen. Those wars have to be stopped. Part of that is telling Saudi Arabia to stop. Lift the blockade, lift the sanctions, immediately return frozen funds. Then the Strait of Hormuz is wide open for business. But again, under the constraints that Iran has stipulated in its Persian Gulf Strait Authority protocols, namely that ships must fill out sort of an application in order to pass through the strait.

Now, there are reports today, I saw both Reuters, I think, or Wall Street Journal, claiming, oh, the talks are heating back up, with Islamabad playing the broker. Now, I've seen that, and hang on here, I can tell you, yeah, we've received some updates that there may be some truth to that, but Iran's position has hardened substantially. So this may be another effort by Trump at his typical market manipulation. Oh, peace is at hand. Stock market goes up, price of oil goes down, and then all of a sudden, next thing you know, we're carrying out airstrikes. So I think we're facing several more stages of up and down, back and forth. Oh, we have a deal. No, we don't have a deal.

I think there was a statement out of Iran last night by one of the senior—I think it was the advisor to Ghalibaf, the Speaker of the Parliament—who said, "We can't negotiate with Trump. It's a waste of time. We just have to wait until he's replaced as president." And whether that's, you know, because he's impeached or because the next election he can't run again. But I think Iran was reaching the point that said, "We're just wasting our time, wasting our breath." And the appointment of General Rezaei to the senior position as the senior advisor to the Ayatollah for the Supreme National Security Council is a signal that Iran's patience with negotiations is running out.

#Glenn

Well, some of the deals, though, the Iranians might be betting on are the ones that don't involve the United States because, well, as you said, they don't really trust them that much, for good reason. I see Trump now going on social media claiming that Iran never actually mentioned any compensation in any of the negotiations or talks. So this is so strange that the Iranians would suddenly ask, where is this? But again, there's Article 6 in the memorandum of understanding. It makes it clear that the U. S. and its allies should make available \$300 billion for the reconstruction of Iran.

So it must have been mentioned in the negotiation, unless this was just a very generous gift from the United States. But the Iranians appear to be betting on diplomacy with Oman. And of course, Oman has some limitations. It's what it can agree to without U.S. support. But the Iranians are now arguing that they are very close to a deal with Oman. How do you see this shifting? Or will it make any changes, or will it essentially be as temporary as any of the other agreements?

#Larry Johnson

It's not going to change anything immediately. It will establish what the framework is going forward. So I could see Iran saying, okay, we'll tax every ship that comes into the Persian Gulf. Every ship coming in is going to pay a tax. After that, if Oman wants to charge them going out, that's Oman's business, but they'll go out through the Omani channel. I could see that happening. I think Iran may not insist on doing a double bang, get them at the front and get them at the end. So the reality right now is that Iran has been positive in its remarks about the negotiations with Oman, and they very well could secure a deal.

But the key player in this is: what's the United States going to do? Is it going to continue to try to enforce this blockade? Now, let me add that while the United States is trying to enforce a blockade, the morale of the sailors, the U.S. sailors on those ships that are enforcing the blockade, is absolutely horrible. The food is poor. They're not getting the kind of support they need in terms of toiletries, days off, shower facilities, functioning toilets, functioning laundry rooms. I've had direct dealings with two different mothers, one the mother of a sailor, the other the mother of a Marine. They don't know each other. I came across them in different contexts, in different places.

But they both told the same story about how their sons had gone on these extended cruise missions, how they lost significant weight, how the food that they were being given was terrible, inadequate, etc. So when you've got that going on, and it's not just these two, we've got further evidence from the families of the crew members of the USS Abraham Lincoln, the aircraft carrier, who were in San Diego with the Secretary of the Navy last week. And boy, they chewed his ass over, again, the complaints about lack of proper food, lack of toiletries, lack of basic sanitary services. So here's the United States trying to run a naval blockade at a time when it's unable to actually properly care for its own sailors.

#Glenn

Well, on the possibility of Trump walking away, simply walking away, one of the main reasons why he wouldn't want to do this is because the last step in the MOU is negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. And I assume he would want some deal. But of course, he could just lean back into the old rhetoric that that whole program has been obliterated. But if he wants this done, do you think

there's any pathway anymore? I see that he also wants to make this deal now with the Saudis, which would essentially wrench into any negotiations with Iran. So how are you reading this situation?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, it's quite confusing. So if you listen to Trump, the Strait of Hormuz is open, okay? And the United States controls it, okay? Then what's the issue with Iran? If the Strait of Hormuz is open and the U.S. controls it, why is Iran even relevant? Well, we know the answer to that: Trump is lying. So when it comes to other issues, such as trying to end the war, trying to walk away, the only way that could ultimately happen is the United States is going to have to get in touch with reality and admit what is the actual case on the ground, what is the actual case with respect to Iran, what is the case with the Saudis.

And we saw something fascinating last week. I call it METO, the Middle East Treaty Organization, M-E-T-O. But we can call it Me Too, a new part of the Me Too movement. And this Me Too movement involves Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan. Now, those three, plus Egypt, previously met in June in Cairo. And all of this came in the wake of statements out of China and out of Russia. Putin said it in Russia. Wang Yi, the foreign minister in China, said it, both of them after they met with Foreign Minister Araghchi of Iran, that there was a need for a new security architecture in the region. And that was the purpose for that meeting in Cairo.

Somehow, out of that meeting, the other three decided not to invite Egypt, or Egypt decided not to want to participate right now, whatever the reason. But when they met in Mecca last week—Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan—that was historically, religiously symbolic. Because if this was just a regular government-to-government agreement, they would have signed that in Riyadh. They didn't have to go all the way to Mecca. The reason they went to Mecca is because of its spiritual significance within the Islamic world. And despite some initial criticism from some legislators in Iran, the Iranian leadership, Ghalibaf, Araghchi, embraced that pact.

And while some speculated that this could have been intended to go after the Yemenis or even possibly against Iran, we've had clear evidence of Yemeni attacks on Saudi Arabia. After, you know, last September, there was a bilateral agreement between the Saudis and Pakistan in which, hey, if someone attacks you, we got your back. Well, even after Yemeni attacks on Saudi Arabia, Pakistan did not respond or involve itself with that at all. And then we saw, again, renewed attacks after all three signed the agreement. In fact, Foreign Minister Fidan of Turkey has been pretty explicit about saying this isn't intended to go after other Muslim nations, intimating that it's got one or two targets: Israel and maybe the United States.

#Glenn

Really? So you see this, even in the United States, I thought that, yeah, going after Iran seemed very unlikely simply because, yes, the Saudis probably wouldn't mind having some collective defense against Iran, but the Pakistanis, I don't see it happening. And, yeah, as well as with Turkey, I just assumed that they have their own—well, not assumed, I know that they have their own motivations for doing this. But I thought to myself, ideally, this would in the future be capable of including Iran to make it essentially an inclusive security architecture, which seeks security with its members instead of taking on this bloc politics.

That being said, if they see the United States, its position being weakened in the region, you don't want too much of a vacuum either. As you said, it could be an effort to essentially allow something new to come in and fill the vacuum so you don't have instability. If this is the case, if it's something to replace the declining United States, at least the presence in the region, that wouldn't surprise me if the Iranians would welcome it. But do you think it could actually be used against Israel?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, well, I do for this reason. Israel has directly threatened Turkey and basically said, "When we're done with Iran, we're coming for you." Now, I don't think that was an idle threat. I don't think that was just trash talking to be trash talking. Or at least the Turks have to take it into account as a serious threat. So now, with this agreement—you've got, because otherwise Turkey, you know, they were left behind. They said, "Well, we're a NATO country. If we're attacked by Israel, surely we'll enact Article 5 and other NATO countries will come to our aid." And I think they looked around and realized, no, that's not going to happen at all. So we've got to secure our support for us as a Muslim nation. And so, in signing this pact with Pakistan and with Saudi Arabia, Turkey gets, in fact, a sort of a de facto nuclear capability vis-à-vis Pakistan. And Pakistan has vowed to protect and to share and to defend Turkey on that front. So this has pushed it into a whole new arena.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, certainly would be a good idea for the region. You know, if you don't want to be frontline states of a declining hegemon, this is not an ideal position to hold, a very vulnerable one, I can add. But I did want to ask, though, if the United States now decides to have another go at the military option against Iran, that they go for this big strike, which Trump continues to threaten about. I mean, he goes a bit back and forth between, well, we're going to make a big, great deal, and also we're going to burn down this whole nation. So it jumps a bit back and forth. But if he would like to go back to the military option, I'm not saying it would make sense, but he's done it already, even though after the MOU he decided to go back attacking Iran.

Didn't make much sense then either, but here we are. So the intentions of Trump are hard to assess, but the capabilities are easier to get a handle on. So what is the situation now in the United States? Because we're hearing a lot about the weapons stockpiles being depleted. Of course, Trump

threatens to hunt down and jail anyone who makes this claim, which is not a source of confidence. But what is the situation now in the United States? Because this isn't just affecting Iran. It's also affecting the war against Russia. And indeed, if the U.S. has some need to actually fight a war that is not a war of choice, but a war of necessity, it might need these weapons. So what is the deal? What is the option now? What is left to fight Iran with?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, that's the problem, the weapon shortage. So I was picking up indications from current military—people currently serving in the military—late last week that it looked like, even though they'd stood down some of the planning and execution cells, it looked like they were coming back online. And people who thought that they were going to have a long weekend off were going, "Oh my God, we're going back." So it looked like they were planning to launch new strikes. Now, today, I would say the risk of that has dissipated. It doesn't mean it can't come back quickly. But for right now, we're not seeing the kind of activity you normally would if there was military action imminent. So that's number one. But the U.S. has a—they have a rare earth mineral problem.

78% of the weapons that the Department of Defense produces rely upon four specific rare earth minerals and tungsten. And it turns out, who controls those rare earth minerals, those four and the tungsten? China does. And China has imposed restrictions on the export of that for military purposes, which means as much as the United States wants to build new weapons or wants to replenish stores of existing weapons systems that have been exhausted, it can't. And it can't because China now controls the supply chain and has said, "Hey, you want to build weapons that you're going to use against us? We're not suicidal. No, that's not going to happen." So they have shut that down. And this is the real disconnect, that the United States has never secured its own supply lines, its supply chains, and now it's suffering the consequences. It's basically being held hostage by China.

#Glenn

Well, I'm glad you mentioned China, because if we now see the U.S. position in the region weakened, then it's hard to get around this fact: there's no way for the U.S. to restore its former position after all this is done. What will be the role of China and, well, Russia, for that matter? Because I know that both of them have, well, tried to do a more balanced approach to the region. That is, not to build any bloc politics. That is, indeed, China pushed for improved relations some years back between the Saudis and the Iranians, simply so they could work with both sides with less friction.

And indeed, Russia, after its military operations in Syria, they kind of see some benefits of this having been put to an end because it kind of made relations with a lot of the Gulf states more difficult. So now they hope to have more balance in the future, that is, to work with both Iran and the Gulf states. Now that the U.S. position is weakening, they're not gone, but one certainly would

prepare for—you know, you look at where the wind is blowing and then begin to adjust. How do you see the Chinese and the Russians, I guess, adjusting to this new environment? Because it's still unclear where this is going, but we do know that it's not going to be the same.

#Larry Johnson

Now, well, we've already seen Russia take a step in that direction. It was yesterday that he met in Moscow, or the day before, with Ahmed al-Sharaa, formerly known as al-Jolani, head of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and now the ostensible president of Syria, in which the Syrians and Russians negotiated a new agreement about Russian presence and control over both naval and air bases. And the meeting appeared to be quite amicable, very friendly. And al-Sharaa, who was perceived as a tool of the West, a tool of Turkey—or Türkiye—is now branching out. He's not staying just in one lane and doing only what the United States would request of him.

So, you know, you got that interesting development. China remains strongly in Iran's camp and also with Russia. In fact, China just within the last hour or so came out with a very strong condemnation of the U.S. government's threat to impose new tariffs on countries like China if they buy Russian oil. And they're saying, no, you can't do that. And if you do it, we're going to make you pay. They will retaliate. So the United States is now rapidly coming up against the limits of its power by using sanctions and by thinking that via the petrodollar it can coerce these other countries.

This is what China and Russia both saw clearly four years ago, right after the start of the special military operation and the imposition of additional Western sanctions, freezing of assets, stealing of money that was in Western banks. And they realized, we've got to build a system where we're insulated from that kind of pressure. And that's exactly what they've been doing. And here is Iran now. The United States is trying to put economic pressure on it, except Iran has moved out of that sphere where it's totally dependent on the U.S. financial markets. It's buying with Chinese and Russian currency what it needs.

It's accepting payment primarily in Chinese currency for goods that it's being sold. And its trade relations with both Russia and China—who were on board for the JCPOA sanctions against Iran—have now firmly rejected all of that and are continuing to have robust economic relations with Iran. Russia comes through the Caspian Sea. China comes via the railroad to Tajikistan, air routes from China, as well as through the port in Pakistan. Then from that port, road routes that run directly into Iran. So while we talked at the outset, Scott Bessent is desperate to try to get Iran crippled economically. Iran's got many more options available today than it did two years ago.

#Glenn

No, definitely. And I think that's the key mistake in both the war against Iran and Russia. That is, traditionally, the interest of the maritime hegemon has been to keep the great powers on Eurasia divided. That is, in Europe, historically, both the British and Americans wanted to keep the Germans

and Russians apart to make sure that a central power wouldn't form capable of challenging the hegemon at the maritime periphery. But now, again, same logic by Kissinger, who wanted the Soviets and the Chinese apart. But now you have these three key balancers of U.S. power on the Eurasian continent. That is, the Russians, the Chinese, and the Iranians all coming closer together. It just seems like something the historians will write about for quite some time, how foolish this has been. But one country which appears to be pushing it even further, though, has been Ukraine.

That is, for a while it looked, based on the rhetoric of Zelensky, but also his actions in terms of striking an Iranian ship and killing one of its sailors, it looked like he might be gambling on linking the Ukraine war with the Iranian war. I mean, yes, it would bring a lot more headaches for the Ukrainians to get on the bad side of Iran. On the other hand, if the key objective for Ukraine to rescue the situation is to bring the United States deeper into the war, then essentially volunteering as an American proxy against Iran would be very much welcomed. And again, this corridor between Russia and Iran very much goes through the Caspian Sea as well. So Ukraine has some capabilities. I mean, this is the launching pad now of NATO against Russia. So do you think this will blow over, or is it still a risk that these two wars could merge into a big one?

#Larry Johnson

Well, in a way, I'd say they've already merged in terms of the application of U.S. weapons systems to both theaters and the discovery that the United States has very, very limited weapons supply. I'm pretty sure that neither the Russians nor the Chinese anticipated that the U.S. stockpile was so fragile, so vulnerable to being exhausted, which is in fact what has emerged. So I think both the Russians and Chinese had assumed the United States had far more strategic depth, and so what the combination of the war in Ukraine and the war in Iran have exposed are the tremendous limitations of the United States militarily. And it does not have the industrial capability that it once did, that Russia and China have in order to replenish munitions.

In fact, what has exposed is the United States is so vulnerable, so dependent upon China and, to a lesser extent, Russia, that it can't operate independently. It is a dependent power. So I think that has been one of these aspects that have come as a surprise, where the two theaters integrated. But we've now seen on the Russian side, they have dramatically stepped up their offensive. They're attacking in the air with missiles, cruise missiles, drones, bombs, key targets in Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine. But now they've closed off the Black Sea, and so they have effectively blockaded Ukraine. Its only access for key supplies will be overland through Hungary, Romania, Poland.

And frankly, that makes those shipments even more vulnerable from the Russian standpoint of using drones on those and short-range ballistic missiles if necessary. And then the way Russia has opened up its on-the-ground offensive against Ukraine is—so, in both situations, whether we're talking Ukraine or Iran, the United States is not faced—they don't have good, clear military options of, okay,

we can do this and we can perhaps stop the Russians or stop the Iranians. No, in both cases, they don't have any viable options. That, I think, has been the biggest shock to both the military establishment and to the political leadership.

#Glenn

I guess on the topic of horrible miscalculations and the Russians now stepping up in a big way, it appeared that, well, in the Kremlin, there's been a lot of pressure on Putin over the past four and a half years that they should put a blockade on Ukraine. That port, especially Odessa, which is so important to keep Ukraine afloat, it's also extremely vulnerable. But as we know, India, other countries in the Global South, they put a lot of pressure on Putin not to disrupt the international trade, especially the agricultural products, which are very much dependent on being exported through these Ukrainian ports. But, and for a long time, this caused a lot of, well, I would say some frustration within Russia that, well, why aren't you doing this?

So, but, you know, Putin has to consider all his—well, there's a lot of considerations you have to balance. But what is interesting now [is] that Ukraine, you know, backed by NATO, started this massive campaign against the 40-day campaign of deep strikes in Russia. And again, I remember all our media was celebrating how all these Russian civilian vessels were being attacked in the Sea of Azov and in the Black Sea. Suddenly all this pressure and restraint on Putin is gone. I mean, can you imagine the foreign minister of India calling Russia, saying, "Oh no, don't retaliate"? There is no pressure anymore. And we now see this brutal response. And, well, again, the bombing of Kiev is quite ruthless. But the blockade on Odessa, though, this is—this is quite crippling.

I mean, not just the military, because they get a lot of the weapons through these ports—sorry, a lot of the weapons—but also the economy. This is going to be a disaster. And all this is happening before the winter is coming, with all the energy problems. I mean, the list goes on and on. But now we see proposals coming out of Turkey that is, let's just ceasefire, or let's open another grain corridor, a little route both for the Russians and another one for the Ukrainians, which we shouldn't attack. I notice there's always a call for diplomatic solutions when things are going bad for NATO. But do you think that that's a possibility? Because both Ukrainians and Russians would benefit from having these routes open. Yeah.

#Larry Johnson

No, no, Russia's done being the nice guy. You know, we'll recall a little bit before your time, but rock musician Alice Cooper had a song, "No More Mr. Nice Guy." That'll be Russia's anthem: no more Mr. Nice Guy, no more Mr. Clean. They're not going to give Ukraine one ounce of easement. They are going to keep the pressure on with greater intensity with each passing day. And they're going to destroy more and more infrastructure. They're going to make sure that the power won't come on come winter. You know, there's a way to end this now.

And frankly, the only reason they didn't move sooner against Odessa and shut down the Black Sea was because, you know, Putin's still old school with agreements. Well, we agreed with the UN that we let them go. And, you know, but now they said, "No, we're done. We're done being the nice guy." And I think it's a threat that has terrified the Ukrainians, because now they genuinely have lost a major outlet for both moving stolen money overseas and receiving foreign aid and weapons systems, as well as food from abroad. So this is a game changer.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, if I was sitting in the Kremlin, my main worry after these four and a half years would have been the escalation dominance handed over effectively to NATO. That is, they can seemingly escalate without any retaliation from Russia. They don't fear any... Yeah, so the deterrence has slipped. NATO obviously doesn't fear Russia now. And also escalation dominance in terms of suddenly the suggestion is, okay, let's just do a 40-day campaign against Russia, bomb civilian targets in deep rear every day. We look in the media, there's some celebration that another Wildberries warehouse has been blown up.

And then, of course, Russian retaliation begins, things go bad, but now suddenly we hear, yeah, diplomacy, let's put an end to it. It didn't work out the way we wanted. If the Russians accept this, they're essentially telling NATO and Ukraine that, okay, if you escalate when you want, then you can decide when we de-escalate. I mean, if you hand over this power to your opponent, why would they have any restraint? And I think the Iranians have reached the same conclusion. Why should the Americans decide when we escalate, when we de-escalate? Why can't we hit Jordan? But do you think this is kind of the calculation? Because I don't know. There's something changing in both Iran and Russia, I feel.

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, in fact, you can make the case. The harder-line elements are now driving the policy. Or, you know, Lavrov, in fact, he's been scathing in his criticism of the United States. So militarily, they're going to crush Ukraine. And then they told the Americans, "Stay out. Get out of Kyiv. If you stick around Kyiv, you're going to potentially die." And the same thing that we're seeing with Iran, with Rezaei, you know, the major general who was one of the first—you know, he was a very youthful commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Command back in 1981, '82. And I can identify with him.

He's my age, so he's 71. Now, I maintain I don't look as beaten up as he does. He looks like he's been ridden hard and put away wet. But nonetheless, he's quite firm about, "We're not just going to negotiate for negotiation's sake. And if we negotiate, there better be concrete terms delivered by the United States, or we're wasting our time." And that's where, you know, Iran is now ready. They're ready for a fight if it comes. They're ready to negotiate if the United States is serious. But so far, they've seen no indication that the United States is serious.

#Glenn

No, it's—well, I guess it's a problem also on the European part. They never talk about peace. They talk about defeating Russia. That is essentially the new peace. But for the United States, do you see any last new efforts to negotiate? Because, again, the Europeans, they really wanted to shut down the whole talks after Anchorage, and they were selling the point very hard to Trump that, well, you know, we should change the battlefield a bit, essentially, you know, embrace your inner Biden and let's, you know, weaken the Russians and we can get a better deal and essentially pull the U.S. deeper into this war.

But it seems that Trump bought into it, you know, the whole "the tide has turned" media campaign. And you even saw Marco Rubio arguing that, you know, the deep strikes in Russia, things have changed now, and maybe Russia will be more flexible in the future. Well, now that Ukraine is being devastated by this new ruthless campaign on the Russian side, we suddenly see some talks: "Well, perhaps we should restart talks with the Russians again. It's time, apparently." So how do you think the Russians will meet them this time? Because they view now, from what I get out of Moscow, they view all of the talks in Anchorage as serious as the MOU with Iran was. It's just, it's not actual diplomacy. It's just tactics to get the pause when you want, you know.

#Larry Johnson

Now, there are reports out of Pakistan saying that the U.S. and Iran have come to some kind of agreement. Okay, we'll see. I've heard that before, and then it turns out to be a nothingburger. The sacrifices, the concessions that Trump would have to make to get a deal with Iran, in my view, are too onerous, too costly to him. For another reason, his own pride, that he'd find it very difficult to do that. But that's not to say that he won't do it, because I think one of the other elements, and we touched on it earlier, is the global economic picture. It's worsening.

And as it worsens, the U.S. prospects get worse. And Trump's got an eye on midterms that are coming up two and a half months away and can't afford to have an economic blowtorch going off in the United States. It's burning everything to the ground. But candidly, that potential sits there, and I think has the White House and Secretary of the Treasury worried about it. So meanwhile, both in Russia and in Iran, the people with a firm, hard line, their voice is the one being heard. Not those who advocate some sort of concession or let's go slow. No, no concession. Drive it home. Deliver the victory.

#Glenn

I keep seeing these journalists being so surprised that, with the Iranians, they seem so hardline now. You would have thought that they would have been more accommodating after all this bombing. You see the same rhetoric against Russia. Oh, it doesn't look like Russia wants peace.

Look how brutally they are responding. I mean, it's as if they bought into their own propaganda that, you know, if we just do enough deep strikes into Russia, somehow now they will be more accommodating rather than less. And I don't think they appreciate that, you know, all the talk about Iran being this, you know, mullah radicals controlling, or Putin being a dictator.

I don't think they appreciate the internal dynamics in these states. As you suggest, the hawks, if you will, the ones who want more hardline policies against the U.S. and the West, they're proven right over and over again that this is aggression, there's no diplomatic path, it's all deceit, and the only thing that will bring peace is victory and humiliating the opponent. I mean, it's a horrible signal to send, but it seems that's what we're doing at the moment. Anyways, do you have any final thoughts before we finish off?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, just keep an eye on the economic news, because I think that's really where the action is going to be that will either motivate a quick decision or lead to a renewed escalation in the fighting.

#Glenn

Yeah, disaster is definitely pending. So, well, thank you as always, and I hope to see you again soon.

#Larry Johnson

All right, my friend, and sorry about the mix-up earlier. Won't happen again, I hope.