

Pepe Escobar: U.S. Desperation: Bribing the IRGC—and Preparing for a Nuclear Strike?

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#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Pepe Escobar, a journalist and political analyst. Thank you for coming back on.

#Pepe Escobar

My pleasure, Glenn. With you anytime.

#Glenn

Appreciate it. We always see when the U.S. goes to war, it has many tools in its toolbox. Of course, it has the raw military power. It has economic sanctions. But a key theme is always that it seeks to sow divisions within a country. Often it takes the form of, well, pretending to promote democracy, human rights. Other times, it's just pure bribery: throw money at the right people. And, yeah, there's now stories that the U.S. attempted to do something similar in Iran, that is, buy off some of the IRGC commanders. And how do you see this has played out? Because desperation appears to be setting in as the U.S. is running out of options, including weapons.

#Pepe Escobar

Yes, Glenn, it's a pleasure to be with you, as usual, and your audience. This has desperation written all over it. Well, it's part of a story that Larry Johnson and myself, we broke earlier this week. We needed extra confirmation. We finally got it. And this last Wednesday, we had the full story and the chain of participants, who was talking to whom, when, what they wanted, etc. And it's quite astonishing in a sense, but also very, very predictable. After all, this is the empire of chaos, lies, plunder, piracy, and bribing as well. And, of course, we all remember that aspiring soprano, Mike Pompeo, on the record: "We lie, we cheat, we steal."

But he forgot to say, "We bribe," which is what they do everywhere, from Latin America to Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, everywhere else. Okay, the short, short version of the story: there was a relatively dormant back channel established by Tulsi Gabbard, when she was still in government, in May, between the White House and the Kurdistan Regional Government, Neshirvan Barzani, the president of Iraqi Kurdistan, essentially, because they wanted to try to talk to Ahmad Vahidi indirectly, the head of the IRGC. So Barzani was supposed to be the messenger. So when they tried, not much happened. The channel was established.

There was a secure line there that was connecting the White House with Barzani, and then Barzani talked to Vahidi. At the time, nothing happened. So the channel was reactivated by the White House again a few days ago because Trump wanted once again to talk to Vahidi using the good services of Barzani. Many of you, our audience, know that Iraqi Kurdistan may be a nest of vipers infested with MI6, CIA, Mossad, you name it, but also the Iranians have good—and vice versa—they have good relations with the Kurdistan government and with the Barzani clan, also with the Talabani clan, the other clan that controls Iraqi Kurdistan.

So the story gets completely nuts on a James Bond level as well, because what Trump wanted to do, and this is how Barzani contacted Vahidi, and then Vahidi explained what happened to the members of the Supreme National Security Council. And this got all the way to Leader Mojtaba Khamenei. Trump wanted to bribe Vahidi to the tune of billions of dollars, unspecified billions of dollars. Not only Vahidi, but other members of the IRGC. And this was a revamp of the Venezuela playbook, essentially: provoking divide and rule from the inside. They couldn't win the war, so they were trying to destabilize the IRGC from the inside in the usual way: suitcases full of untraceable cash. It's what they have done all over the Global South, in fact.

Vahidi, obviously, he told Barzani, absolutely no way. Not only that, he told the rest of the IRGC, the Supreme Council, and this got to the Leader as well. And then the office of the Leader authorized members of the office to pass this information back to the Pakistanis, because the Pakistanis—before, there was an attempt to recruit Field Marshal Asim Munir, because Asim Munir and Trump, they are on speed dial, both sides. It didn't work, and that was Plan B via Barzani in Iraqi Kurdistan. So the information was relayed back to the Pakistanis, and that's how we learned the details, including the chain of communication and how this channel, this back channel, was reactivated a few days ago. So, major failure for the Trump administration again.

And on top of it, they were talking to the wrong person, Glenn, instead of talking to the guy who actually runs everything, including top IRGC operations, Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, personal representative of Leader Mojtaba Khamenei. So they thought that Iran was Venezuela, which once again demonstrates the degree of cultural stupidity, on an intergalactic level, of these people in the Trump administration, thinking that they can bribe people who fought the Iran-Iraq War, and they are essentially at the vanguard of defending Iran under

existential threat by a superpower. These people are not bribable. Forget it. But once again, reeks of desperation. Once again, desperation written all over it. And, okay, this is the Roy Cohn mafia school of doing business, which is the only thing that Donald Trump studied in his whole life, in fact.

#Glenn

Well, part of the desperation, though, in the United States to try this as well, it kind of makes sense. That is, they don't have a clear diplomatic off-ramp. I mean, they burned a lot of bridges. The last one they burned was the MOU, which finally got in place, and then, of course, walked it back immediately. They also don't have a clear military pathway here to victory. That is, they already began exhausting their military resources. They will take ages to replenish it, but it appears that Trump is now going for the third option.

That is, let's scale back the military and go for economic pressure. So he announced this economic D-Day. But the success of it, I guess, depends on the U.S. being able to uphold this wall of steel, this double blockade on Iran. But, I mean, it's some limited capabilities there, but also it's premised on the idea that Iran will simply sit back and accept economic strangulation. Do you see anything in Iran in terms of preparedness to go on the offensive and, well, I guess, punch a hole in this blockade of the United States?

#Pepe Escobar

Well, punch many holes in every kind of blockade, maritime and financial blockade. The underlying logic, from their point of view—the Trump administration and that absolutely ghastly Scott Bessent, Soros asset, by the way—is that they are able to strangle Iran financially and economically and isolate Iran not only from their partners across Eurasia, but from any other partners across the Global South. Well, the degree of stupidity in this kind of assumption is once again intergalactic. But from these players, this is what you expect. Look at the map. You know it very, very well. You are a specialist in Eurasia. If you look at the map of Eurasia, who's at the center in terms of connectivity corridors? Historically, Iran.

So, are they going to be able to block all the channels of communication, especially over land, that Iran has with their neighbors? No. Are they going to be able to block financial transactions bypassing the U.S. dollar with several players, especially with China? No. So what could they do in terms of applying extra pressure? The Chinese companies are already... People in China are not... People who are in business in China, they are not worried. Or even Chinese banks, because the new directives of the central powers in China to Chinese companies is, look, you don't respect and you don't follow American direct sanctions or secondary sanctions. You have to respect Chinese law. This is what matters. So the banks understood the matter. And the banks, Chinese banks, are helping not only Iran, but Pakistan as well.

They are helping Iran and Pakistan in all sorts of transactions. Plus, there are transactions using the Islamic system, which is basically one telephone here, another telephone on the other side, and money is transferred without actually moving. So Iran does that with several partners everywhere—companies, individuals, you name it. In terms of overland connections, the Americans are not yet blocking, because they couldn't find a way to block this without, frankly, throwing Pakistan into China's lap, like 150%. Pakistan is already in China's lap, around 80% to 90%, because Pakistan still has ties with the international financial system. And on top of it, they depend on an IMF loan, which is the worst thing that can happen to any country anywhere in the Global South.

So the Pakistanis are not free. For instance, if they were members of BRICS, or if they were members of the BRICS Bank, the NDB, an arrangement with the Chinese could go through the NDB, for instance, for these \$10 billion that they need so badly. But they still depend on the IMF, which brings us to the whole discussion everywhere across the Global South: how to get rid of the Bretton Woods system. As long as this does not happen, we cannot talk about an independent Global South. This is what is discussed at BRICS, but it's an infernal blah, blah, blah that goes on forever. I've been following this story for years. And after a while, we are exasperated because they talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, and there are no decisions.

And as you know, Glenn, next month is the BRICS summit in India. Don't expect any breakthroughs on that, unfortunately, especially because this is hosted by India. So, the Americans will try to interfere in trade and commerce via the overland corridors between Pakistan and Iran, six of them. They will try to interfere in Balochistan, and then they can use the CIA, MI6, Mossad, etc. They have been there even before 9/11; they were already there. We can have, for instance, NATO drones attacking Iranian ships in the Caspian Sea. Anything is possible. And the Caspian Sea, of course, for Iran is essential because it's the Russia-Iran corridor.

And, of course, they could try to attack the China-Iran railway from Iran all the way to Xinjiang via Turkmenistan and Central Asia. But they cannot. That was the theme of one of my columns this week. Whatever they do, they cannot turn Iran into an island. Iran is hyper-connected with all the neighbors, especially Central Asia and South Asia, and all the way to China. The Americans cannot do anything against that. On top of it, Russia and China, they got Iran's back, and they will find other ways. And they already transact with Iran bypassing the U.S. dollar. So there's nothing Ghastly Blinken and company can do against that. But you're right.

Now we are on the next stage, and it's very, very nasty. It is total war, economically and financially, against Iran. But they are not. And when you follow what is being discussed in Iranian media, they're not worried. First of all, because they're already expecting it. Second, they have so many different mechanisms with all the partners all across Eurasia. For instance, they will be discussing this in their bilaterals at BRICS. Expect big, big things, not at the BRICS summit, but the bilaterals between Iran and Russia, Iran and China. These are going to be quite something at BRICS. And the number one is, okay, how can the three of us bypass the Americans?

So this is where we are at the moment. Yes, it's very, very hard. The Pakistani position is very precarious because they have to... They are on a razor's edge. They cannot antagonize the Americans because they need the IMF. And at the same time, they cannot break their relationship with Iran, especially these past few months. They built trust. They were the mediators between Iran and the U.S. There are delegations, Iran-Pakistan, visiting each other literally every week. So they are in a very, very complicated position. But that's the problem when you are a Global South country and you depend on the Bretton Woods system.

#Glenn

Yeah, but I think a key problem for the United States now would be, as you said, Iran is already geographically quite a central power, but it's also tied in to industrial cooperation as well as financial cooperation with China and the other Eurasian giants. Well, primarily China and Russia were willing to push back against the United States. But, yeah, so, yeah, I think the problem for the U.S. is they went after everyone at the same time. You know, if they just had gone only after Iran and then tried to find some way of accommodating Chinese and Russian interests, it would be one thing.

But launching an economic war against China, launching an actual, like, proxy war against the Russians, and then a direct war against Iran—all of them now standing back to back, though. That is the western, the southern, and the eastern part of the Eurasian continent all, you know, having their survival essentially reliant on cooperating with each other and finding ways of avoiding U.S. sanctions. It's quite foolish. And you see now, it's very hard for the Chinese. In the past, they might have accepted, you know, limiting a bit the trade with the Russians, which they did, limiting with North Korea. But now that, you know, now that they've essentially gone overboard, they kind of have to dismiss America and accept punishment on some issues. Why not all?

So I think they really overplayed their hand, the U.S., on this. It's quite extraordinary that this was predicted by many countries, and they did it anyway. But I did want to ask you about the military pressure, though. If there are no more military options, where can the U.S. go from here? I ask because we do hear some rumors, and I want to—yeah, be very specific. There are rumors, but as desperation grows in Washington, we hear now talk by people like Marjorie Taylor Greene, and you hear it from other corners as well, that there's talk in the U.S. now about considering the use of nuclear weapons, supposedly tactical nuclear weapons, not strategic weapons. Yeah, this is important because tactical nuclear weapons are essentially battlefield nukes.

Strategic nuclear weapons are essentially city killers. But it's nuclear weapons nonetheless. So if this is correct, and I have to again say if, it is quite dramatic. And when you open up Pandora's box, the world wouldn't be the same afterwards. But how do you see this? Is this likely? Because if you have a great power like the United States, it's linked its security to hegemony. Knocking out Iran would be a stepping stone to weakening the Russians and the Chinese. This war is everything. If they fail it, the regional presence falls apart. The petrodollar could disappear. I mean, the Americans tend to

have a lot to lose here. And when you have a great power with a lot to lose locked in this all-or-nothing scenario, expect, you know, for them to do some foolish things, perhaps.

#Pepe Escobar

Well, Glenn, the most terrifying aspect is that the Americans are now starting a campaign to normalize the use of tactical nuclear weapons. This is as terrifying as it gets. Don't forget that what we can describe as the Atlanticist syndicate, they normalized the genocide. There was not a peep from the collective West, a peep that really matters. And the Global South was horrified, but there was nothing the Global South could do about it to prevent it. And now it's the same thing. It starts with informal discussions at the White House, at the National Security Council, you know, extrapolated to a few think tanks and treating it like going to a street-corner bar and buying ice cream.

Absolutely normal. And that's the terrifying part. It's the banality of evil that we used to know, as it was codified in the 20th century. And the banality of evil in the 21st century is much, much, much more hardcore. It now includes normalizing a genocide and the use of nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear country, unprovoked. And it's discussed like, you know, an after-dinner conversation. This is the most serious aspect of it all. And obviously, because people are so anesthetized by this bombardment of information from everywhere, and they cannot tell what is real, what's fake, and what makes sense, and especially why mostly everything does not make sense, this enters the public discourse by accident.

And nobody even takes it seriously. They won't do something like this. Of course they will, especially now because they have their backs against the wall. And as you described very, very well, this is the clash of the 21st century. There's one way or another. Either the Americans are able to make Iran fold, conquer Iran, transform Iran into a new colony, and that will be the first step towards getting deeper, deeper into the war against Russia and later against China. Or we have the integration of Eurasia led by these three powers: two superpowers, China and Iran, and one middle power, which is ascending very, very fast. And now it's one of the most important powers, not only in Eurasia but across the Global South.

That's it. This is the clash of the 21st century. And there will be only one victor. There is no draw in this clash, unfortunately, for all of us, literally. And of course, considering that now, the current concurrence of circumstances, we have a psychopathic toddler as the messenger of these elites as president of the United States. We have the real American elites terrified of the immediate future if and when they have to absorb two strategic defeats in a row, one in Ukraine because of the proxy war and another one in Iran. So the whole geopolitical architecture of the planet is going to change because of these two strategic defeats. For them, this is beyond anathema.

They will use anything in the playbook, including now this pathetic total economic-financial war against Iran, which came out of their magician's hat in a matter of days. They never planned this

before. There's no planning behind it. It is a Hail Mary pass, a financial-economic Hail Mary pass, by people who have no idea how business is conducted in this part of Eurasia, or across Eurasia for that matter. So that's how serious the whole thing is. Even if, for the moment, these discussions are not in the public eye, they are being normalized so that when they come to public scrutiny, the decision has already been made and they will go for it with no scruples, because they have no scruples. This is how serious it gets, you know.

#Glenn

Yeah, the genocide issue. I mean, I remember with Gaza first, the discussion was, "Oh, is it really genocide, or is it just some collateral damage?" And then slowly, yeah, okay, it's genocide, but, you know, what are you going to do? And then suddenly you end up the same with Iran. It's kind of normalized, this rhetoric: "Okay, we're going to annihilate civilization tonight." And this is, okay, now not a peep from any of the capitals. So it is, that's a good point, it is becoming normalized. But in terms of nuclear weapons, though, for, you know, at least ever since Obama's presidency, there was—there's been a lot of literature on how to, you know, not legitimizing the use of nuclear weapons, but the technology behind using it more, making it more usable.

So arguing, oh, we can develop these lower-yield nuclear weapons. So, smaller explosive yield that can make nuclear weapons seem more proportionate. You know, it has limited military objectives, so it's not, you know, destroying the world. So you see the rhetoric always going there. It's just, it's quite extraordinary, though, because... I wish there was a conceptual idea in the US for an acceptable multipolar system as a possible off-ramp, because so far it appears that the only game in town is, you know, if you finish off the Iranians, Russians, and Chinese, we can go back to the 1990s, essentially. But... But in the 1990s, they had all power. They were all-powerful. All power was concentrated in the collective West. And this was, you know, it didn't lead to perpetual peace 30 years later.

It's, you know, we are where we are now. And so I don't see how they're going to go back to this. They're now \$40 trillion in debt. They have massive economic inequality at home. You have society exhausted, political polarization. Is this really the only game plan? I wish there would be something, you know, like you have the Americans show up at a BRICS meeting or something just to find out if there is some way of coming together to find some solution, some off-ramp, that is some political settlement based on the existing international distribution of power instead of looking at how to knock out rivals in some absurd Game of Thrones. But it's not. There's nothing really there. But what would be the purpose then of tactical nuclear weapons? Is this to shock Iran into capitulation? Exactly.

#Pepe Escobar

It's their absolute only game. Yeah, yeah, that's the game. You nailed it. In the minds of these very mediocre functionaries of the Trump administration, they still think that they can make Iran fold,

capitulate, surrender. They tried everything. It didn't work. Economic strangulation. They know that it will not work. But, okay, a few bombs and they will capitulate. No, that's not how it works. First of all, because if we come to this terrifying scenario, the Arabs on the other side of the Persian Gulf will be equally affected. And they will be part of the Iranian response. The GCC will disappear. Period. Because Iran is going to bomb everything inside. So no more oil, no desalination plants, you name it. You'll be back to being a desert with some camel caravans, if the camels survive. That's it. That's what it was in the past.

So, number one, will it disaggregate the top of the Iranian government? No. No, because there is now a solidified pact involving all these elites. They are defending the nation against this existential threat, and they are going all the way. And on top of it, there is a popular mandate, which is exactly what we saw during the funeral ceremonies of Ayatollah Khamenei. And the number one motto all across Iran, from the big cities to the countryside, all the way to the Iran-Afghan border, is revenge. This is the popular mood everywhere in Iran. So we can talk about 90 million people that will not settle for anything less than revenge, or to go all the way against the Americans and to expel the Americans from West Asia, which, when you read the fine line of what Iran is demanding for a solution to the war, is basically to expel the U.S. from West Asia.

And they are on their way, because most of those bases, they are practically devastated or virtually devastated. There's not much left. The Americans have to transfer most of it to Israel. So the Americans are in a box inside Israel, which, from a real point of view, is fantastic. And geographically and territorially, it's a very small part of West Asia. Perfect. They can concentrate all their firepower on Israel, depending on what happens next. And it's impossible, Glenn. You, as an academic, and you studied Eurasia in detail, what we see in our books. I loved your books. I wrote about your books. And you explain in detail how Eurasia works with the different actors and the limitations of the Americans and Israelis to impose this policy, completely unilateral, ideologically demented vision and system of power over everyone. It will never happen.

But of course, they will die trying, literally. So that's why it's still so dangerous. And they finally found an enemy that is not running away, not dissolving in the first few days, not accepting suitcases full of cash, capable of fighting back and fighting back fiercely. They never had that since the end of the Second World War. So that's why they are like cockroaches in the desert, literally. And that's why, as you mentioned in the beginning, there's no strategy for anything. They have some tactical ideas that may last one day, two days, one week, three weeks, and then it's over. There's no strategic thinking. Nobody in that National Security Council, industrial-military complex, nobody can think strategically, apart from one or two people who are not in top positions of power. And then what they do, they redact the National Security Strategy.

When you read the National Security Strategy, it's exactly what we're talking about: how to defeat Russia, China, and Iran. And, of course, North Korea, which is a nuclear power. You cannot defeat North Korea. North Korea is a nuclear power, and they will use their nuclear power. And that's right. Nobody messes with them. So there's no strategic way. There's no strategic thinking, no strategic

way out. The desperation mounts. They come up with one fancy idea after another every week. We have the cartoonish vociferations of the president of the United States, and nobody pays attention to them anymore. People essentially mock them everywhere, from a favela in Brazil to a slum in Cairo. You know, the number one butt of jokes on the planet is the president of the United States.

But as we all know—you, our audience, everybody—they are getting more dangerous by the minute. And it's not only the \$40 trillion unpayable debt. It's not only that they pay more interest than the whole budget of the Pentagon. The money that they don't have, they have to basically print—printing presses, that green toilet paper that they print all the time. They are desperate because most of the buyers in the world, they are refusing to buy U.S. Treasury bonds. And so nobody will buy U.S. Treasury bonds except the U.S. Treasury itself. This is it. And, of course, the petrodollar is on the way out. Slowly still, but surely. So my question to you, Glenn Diesen: do you see any way out or off-ramp for the empire at the moment, realistically, in realpolitik terms? How do you see it? Yeah.

#Glenn

No, I don't see any. That's why I thought if there's no economic ability to strangle the Iranians economically, no military path to victory, you would assume that they would go for a diplomatic option. But again, you see the same assumption that went with Russia back in 2022. They assumed, okay, we can defeat them on the battlefield if we send enough weapons. We can strangle their economy. The ruble would be rubble. And, of course, it would isolate them completely in the international system. Now we see the same with Iran. We can suffocate their economy. No, you cannot.

You can't defeat them militarily and also isolate them internationally. No. If anything, Iran's connections with the rest of the world are stronger now than they were before. I think there's a lot of miscalculation. A common theme in all of the U.S. miscalculations appears to be the assumption that Iran can be bullied into submission, either by military or economic means. And, you know, I guess it's not completely unreasonable. Every country has their breaking point. But why is it that—well, what is the miscalculation here? Why is it that they're not able to, I guess, break Iran?

#Pepe Escobar

Well, because they don't understand the Shiite ethic of resistance, of affirming sovereignty, of self-sacrifice, of suffering for their own ideals and values. Let's say the spirit of Karbala. Can you imagine anybody in the Trump White House or National Security Council that actually studied the birth of Shiism, know anything about Imam Hussein, etc.? Of course not. And this is the Shiite spirit. It's the ethics of resistance, right? They didn't even understand what moved the Islamic Revolution in the first place. It was an anti-colonial movement. It was a Shiite movement of resistance and also an anti-colonial movement because it was against Iran being a colony of the United States during the Shah, which it was at the time.

And that spirit, that ethic united everybody, united secular students and the clerics as well. What happened afterwards is a very complicated story, but the original drive and push for the Islamic Revolution was to correct a historical wrong and to eliminate the status of Iran as a mere gendarme of the Gulf, as it was described by the U.S. at the time. So, apart from everything that went wrong with the Islamic Revolution, that's a long discussion as well. Now, because they were attacked frontally by the United States, two wars practically in sequence, and their whole leadership was assassinated, almost everybody, from Soleimani in the beginning of what I call the Raging Twenties.

The twenties started with the murder, the murder of General Soleimani on January 3. In fact, a threat to Ayatollah Khamenei and a great deal of his family, all the commanders that were assassinated in the past. So that is a new era in Iran. And the way this new era started was with popular support, even if they had an invisible leader. Like Mojtaba Khamenei was invisible from the beginning. He still is. He cannot appear in public for security reasons, essentially. He is in control, according to our best sources, but he cannot appear anywhere. So people all across Iran, they are devoting themselves, their respect, and they believe in the leadership of an invisible leader.

And the people who are around him or in contact with him, the political vector, Ghalibaf, Araghchi, et cetera, and the IRGC vector, military vector, they are now the guardians of Iran. And the way it's being interpreted all across the Global South is—I heard this from people in Africa, in Brazil, in parts of Asia—they are the vanguard of the Global South, defending the Global South from this empire on the loose. So this is how serious the whole thing is. So Iran found there's a newfound status of Iran as a huge Global South power, which is now on the vanguard of defending the Global South as a whole from these extremely dangerous lunatics, which we could describe as, again, as the Epstein syndicate.

That's another long story. But this is a pretty good definition, only two words. It explains almost everything. And, of course, their delirium of being, "We'll be able to control everything." And in the case of the American elites, "We cannot lose the free lunch that we had since 1945." Can you imagine if you are a superpower with unlimited power since 1945? You'll never want to lose your free lunch. But this is exactly what's happening now. How psychologically can you adapt to that? It's impossible. And that explains, to a large extent, this non-strategic behavior of cockroaches in the desert. One tactic out of nowhere coming every week, one after another, and leading nowhere, and failure after failure.

#Glenn

Yeah, it's quite interesting that the U.S. initially wanted to sell this war as, you know, well, ridding it of nuclear weapons or liberating women, so essentially having to fight a rogue state, and somehow... They messed this up so much. Now it's widely seen around the world as an anti-

hegemonic struggle where the Iranians are essentially fighting a similar fight as all of the Global South. I mean, it's quite extraordinary how they lost the soft power and the narrative control over this.

But also, I think with Iranians, I sometimes think about this: Bismarck, in the late 1880s, wrote to the British Foreign Secretary that the danger of going to war with Russia was that whenever a serious war would threaten its national independence and integrity, the whole country would just come together and millions of men would then pick up arms. So you should be—yeah, don't do that. That was essentially the message. But of course they didn't take their own advice a few decades later. But you do see something here with Iran, like you said. Not everyone in Iran has been comfortable with the Islamic Revolution and necessarily has problems with the government, like any other country. But this is really—if the government ever needed a legitimacy boost, America delivered it. This is quite extraordinary. Yes.

#Pepe Escobar

Yes, absolutely. Well, I'm very curious. Retrospectively, Glenn, I wish Brzezinski was alive and we, both of us, could ask him directly: How do you see the fact that now the United States is fighting not only one peer power, as you qualified in *The Grand Chessboard* in 1997, but a strategic alliance of peer powers and, on top of it, a rising power in Eurasia? The U.S. is fighting this triad at the same time. I would love to get his answer for that.

#Glenn

Well, in his defense, in his 1997 book *The Grand Chessboard*, he did warn that the way that the U.S. would sustain its unipolar moment would be to keep the adversaries divided and the allies dependent. And he defined the worst scenario then as being the Russians, Chinese, and Iranians finding common cause, essentially, to balance the U.S. So there was some recognition that this is the worst possible thing the U.S. could do, which it did. Well, it's going to take me to my last question. And if the U.S. doesn't really have any more good military option besides a nuclear strike, it doesn't have a good way of putting more economic pressure. I know they just announced economic D-Day, and the bribery in order to split or divide the Iranians from within is also failing.

It seems that the logic would be: go back to the negotiation table. But how do you see that working now? Because, I mean, they kind of spent that diplomatic capital as well. There's no trust anymore. So how—well, I guess the Iranians would always talk, you know. If there's a good deal, why not take it? But what do you think? What are the conditions of the Iranians now, you think? I know the Americans are suggesting that the Iranians should wave the white flag, but given that the Americans signed the MOU, which was more or less a declaration of surrender, it's an admission that the Iranians are on top here. So what would the Iranians demand in this round, given that the Americans walked back yet another deal?

#Pepe Escobar

They are not demanding anything that is not in the MOU, Glenn. And, for instance, the Chinese, a few weeks ago, maybe between one and two weeks ago, basically said again, there's no renegotiation of the MOU or another treaty or whatever. Everything is in the MOU. It's a matter of fulfilling our commitments. It was signed by both presidents. The Iranians were starting to follow everything, and then the Trump administration blew it up again. Sergei Lavrov: they are non-agreement capable. Everybody now knows that. Even camels in the Sahara know that the United States is non-agreement capable. So everything is in the MOU. And if you read the MOU, it's very, very harsh.

And obviously, one wonders why the president of the United States actually signed that. Of course, because he knew that he would break it up later. So he didn't even read it. Trump cannot explain what's in the MOU, starting with end of all wars, which is already in paragraph one. This includes, obviously, Israel against Lebanon. He didn't do anything about it. All the follow-the-money questions, which there was, let's say, a little beginning with Qatar involved and all that. And then the Americans blocked it. Sanctions relief. There was not even an attempt on sanctions relief. You name it. So everything is there. And the Iranians are saying, look, the only thing we saw there, we signed.

So the commitments are bilateral. So we have to follow the 14 points. So if the Americans would ever follow the 14 points, this would be an admission of their strategic defeat. So we need to understand why they simply cannot accept it, because it's proven that they lost the war in every, every, every sense. And it would solve, theoretically, the Strait of Hormuz problem, but not for the U.S., because the Strait of Hormuz problem for the U.S. is a petrodollar problem. It's not the Strait of Hormuz per se. This was a war for oil, for the petrodollar, and a war about an oil choke point. And the Americans lost sight of what they were really fighting for.

They lost the Strait of Hormuz almost immediately. And they were never going to get it back. This means everything that crossed, including the birds that crossed the Strait of Hormuz, everybody is going to be outside of the petrodollar. That's it. And that's why they are absolutely terrified of the repercussions. And they also know that alternative ways of exporting via, for instance, the Red Sea, this can be blocked anytime. The Yemenis can decide to block the Bab al-Mandab for everybody, not only for Saudi petrol tankers. It's very, very easy. They can do this in a flash. They already did it. And in terms of the connectivity corridors, it's one of my favorite themes for the 21st century.

The 21st century is a sequence of wars for connectivity corridors, or between connectivity corridors. That's why Iran is so important, because Iran is part of the top two connectivity corridors in Eurasia: the New Silk Roads, horizontal, and the International North-South, vertical, right in the middle of everything. And once again, because even American elites, not only they don't know history, they don't know geography. It's even worse. And they don't understand the interconnection between geography and history. No wonder they go into an unplanned war without studying history and geography.

#Glenn

This is what you get.

#Pepe Escobar

We should not be astonished by the situation nowadays. It's not only a lack of planning, it's a lack of going back to school.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, I agree. Well, they should know some of these corridors because, well, if you look at the North-South Corridor, the one going from Russia, Iran, down to India, it almost follows the exact same route as the Americans used to ship weapons to the Soviets during World War II. So they should be familiar with some of this logistics. Yeah, but you don't see it, though. It's interesting what he said about Trump. You know, if he hasn't read the MOU, it does sound like an exaggeration, but he goes on social media and he actually wrote that all the Iranians now demand reparations.

They never discussed receiving any money in any of our meetings, but, you know, in the same MOU he signed in '06, it lists that the U.S. and its allies should provide 300 billion to rebuild Iran. So I'm wondering, is he just lying, hoping that people won't know? Or is he also lying to himself? Because there's this nice passage by Dostoevsky when he makes the point that, you know, never lie to yourself. You know, if you start doing that, then you won't distinguish reality from falsehood. And it could be that, you know, too many decades of being the champion of BS, you know, which is what he's been great at, spinning narratives and all that, he simply believes what he's saying, essentially. It is possible, but otherwise, it's hard to understand why he would post something like this when you can just fact-check it.

#Pepe Escobar

But he doesn't read, Glenn. This is something we know from people who worked with him in New York. They all say the same thing. He never reads anything. Nothing. Not a book. You see the photos of his house. There's not a single book in his bloody apartments, houses, or whatever. And everything is Fox News news bites. That's it. And they should not last more than one minute. So his attention span is minimalistic as well. So, no introspection, no self-reflection, no critical thinking. Never admit a mistake. This is the Roy Cohn Mafia school of doing business, which is the only school that he ever attended in life, really. Everything he learned from Roy Cohn: never admit a mistake.

Always go on the offensive. Destroy your critics with one or two foul words. And never go back on your actions. That's exactly what we're seeing in this non-conduct of a war. So it fits the main character, the absolutely pathetic main character. If there was some grandeur behind it, we could think, ah, maybe these are the elements of a Greek tragedy. No, no, because the main character is

as trashy as it gets, you know. This is really a trashy novel at best, you know. And we can never expect anybody around him to instill some sense into him, first of all, because he didn't listen. Another thing that he learned from Roy Cohn: never listen to other people when they start contradicting you. There you go.

#Glenn

Well, I guess I want to say that these tactics, it did take him this far, making him, well, giving him a second presidency. So now that he finally hit a brick wall and it's not working anymore, you can kind of get an appreciation for the desperation, which is definitely setting in. And yeah, he's uncertain what to do. I just, I don't know. I think Trump desperate could be a very dangerous animal, which is why, yeah, I'm a little bit worried this time.

#Pepe Escobar

Yeah.

#Glenn

Anyways, thank you very much. I always appreciate them.

#Pepe Escobar

I look forward to speaking with you. Always a pleasure. Thanks so much. Thank you.