

# Larry Johnson TERMINATED by YouTube, Failed Regime Change and the Iran Crisis.

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What really stopped the US carrier group from launching strikes on Iran? Is it possible to fight back when the algorithmic gods delete your channel and your bank account simultaneously? I'm diving into these jagged edges of reality with Larry C. Johnson. As a former CIA analyst and key voice within Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, Larry doesn't just speculate on the machinery of empire—he knows the blueprints, having watched the system turn its crosshairs from foreign adversaries to domestic dissenters. Links: Sonar21: <https://sonar21.com/> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Goods Store: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 YouTube Censorship & Lack of Due Process 00:04:39 Government Influence on Social Media 00:10:27 The Death of Open Debate in Mainstream Media 00:16:22 US Foreign Policy: Casualty Counts & Gaslighting 00:23:04 Fighting for Free Speech & Online Communities 00:28:18 The Failed Regime Change Attempt in Iran 00:35:42 International Law vs. The Law of the Jungle 00:41:09 Presidential War Powers & Media Manipulation 00:46:56 The Importance of Open Platforms & Conclusion

## #Pascal

Welcome, everybody. We are back on Neutrality Studies, and today I'm joined once more by Larry C. Johnson, a former CIA analyst and member of the group Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity. Larry, welcome back. Thanks, Max. Good to be with you, man. I was recently deleted from YouTube for 16 hours, and it was a really dramatic experience for me, even though I knew this could happen at any time. It's really, really disturbing when it does. Then my channel was put back up. In the process of that, I actually learned that I had missed the fact that your own channel was deleted by YouTube about a year and a half ago, and it wasn't put back on. I mean, I apologize — it just didn't pop up on my radar, also because you're still around on YouTube on many other channels. But can you tell me a little bit about what happened to you about 18 months ago?

## #Larry Johnson

Yeah, I just, you know, one day—just like you—you wake up, go to get on the channel, and boom, it's gone. Then I notice, hey, they're accusing me of hate speech. I'm like, what did I say? What was the offending video? Oh, they won't tell you that. So there's absolutely no due process. I was

fortunate, though—I got in contact with Jeffrey Wernick, who’s the owner of BitChute. And Jeffrey is firmly committed to non-censorship. He won’t allow any kind of pornography, and he won’t allow anything that involves children on his channel.

But politically, you know, if you want to argue that the Holocaust was not real, he’ll allow that—even though he’s Jewish. He’ll allow things that offend him. But he’s really made some strides forward. And so, you know, I had no recourse. I was just pleasantly surprised to hear that you at least got an answer back from them and they finally reconsidered. But in my case, no—it was a death blow. I had years of video that I unfortunately hadn’t backed up.

**#Pascal**

Yeah, that’s the other thing that’s so absolutely hurtful. If this option—or this possibility—wasn’t on the radar, then, you know, a lot of people put videos up, and since it’s always there, the belief is that it always will be. But it isn’t. Right, right. When this happened, did you have the chance to at least click on the little appeal button?

**#Larry Johnson**

Oh, yeah, I did—multiple times. And they’d come back and basically say, “Go pound sand.”

**#Pascal**

The problem is, they have absolute control—total control—over the channel. I keep saying the channels are nothing but a checkbox in a very large spreadsheet somewhere at Google HQ. And they can take away that checkbox any time they want. But they have different policies. The policy I was accused of violating was “spam and deceptive practices.” The policy you were accused of was “hate speech.” Of course, they didn’t provide any example, I suppose, of yours... None at all.

**#Larry Johnson**

You know, it’s one thing if you say, “Hey, this one particular video was considered hateful,” and then you give me the chance—well, I can either take it down, or I can re-record it and try to clarify. But I wasn’t... you know, the only “hate” I was engaged in was hating the genocide that was happening to the Palestinian people. But I wasn’t responding to that by making anti-Jewish remarks. I’ve always made a point of saying I speak out against Zionism because Zionism is not Judaism. There are Jews who embrace the concept of Zionism, just as there are Christians who embrace the concept of Zionism. But again, there was no recourse, no appeal, nothing.

**#Pascal**

Do you think you were the victim of an earlier regime of censorship in the US? Let me explain that a bit. It's all speculation, because we really don't have any insight into these processes. But what we've seen under the Biden administration—and what we saw under the COVID regime that emerged—is that it's now proven there was government influence directly in the social media sphere, right? The Twitter Files luckily exposed that. And thank you, Elon Musk, for actually making that available.

And thank you, Matt Taibbi and others, for actually working through those documents. Sure. So, they created a system, right, where the White House would basically send emails and flag content, and then Twitter would selectively act on it—either suppress it or take it down. On YouTube, we saw several channels removed during the Biden era, and yours seems to have been one of them. This kind of thing has changed—or at least, in my perception, under the Trump administration it calmed down. What's your observation on this, you know, over the last five or six years of this up and down?

### **#Larry Johnson**

Well, it's calmed in some ways and gotten worse in others. Now, if you criticize Israel—if you criticize the conduct of the war against the Palestinians—that becomes a charge that you're engaging in anti-Semitic speech. And what's really crazy about it is you get people like Max Blumenthal accused of being anti-Semitic—as a Jew, yes. Same for Aaron Maté, who's Jewish. Jeffrey Sachs too.

### **#Pascal**

And his dad, Gabor Maté. Actually, there are a lot of very prominent anti-Zionist Jews on YouTube, you know, including John Mearsheimer.

### **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, so in that regard, I think it's still just as bad. It can still be used. In fact, we learned yesterday that Scott Ritter was debanked—the Citizens Bank took his money. The problem is, he's supposed to get it back in two weeks, but all of a sudden they can just say, "OK, we're no longer going to allow you to bank with us." And again, there's no legal recourse. They pull the plug on you. And it turned out that the plug-pulling came from the Trump administration. Did it? Yes. Yeah.

### **#Pascal**

Do we know anything about that? What can you share with us?

### **#Larry Johnson**

When he was tracking it, he actually called the Office of Foreign Assets Control—OFAC—and they said the decision had been made at a higher level within the federal government. So again, they were targeting him. And, you know, they can do the same to me. They did try to do it to you. I

mean, to accuse you of spam and deceptive practices is ridiculous—you've got one of the most anti-spam shows on the Internet.

## **#Pascal**

I still believe, in my own case, that this was a genuine IT glitch, in the sense that over the last six months we've seen an unprecedented rise in AI videos on the internet. We've had AI pretending to be Mearsheimer, pretending to be Jeffrey Sachs, pretending to be Alexander Mercouris. You were also impersonated? Oh, man. There are at least three channels out there with me. So there's real AI spam going on, and YouTube must, must do something about it. It's just ridiculously easy to make a channel. These bots create them—it must be a constant cat-and-mouse game. Thousands, if not tens of thousands, of channels a day, is my guesstimate. So they have to do something.

And I actually have another project running, through which I know that a year ago it was really easy to create a channel in anyone's name. I mean, I work on a project where we run channels for others, and there was no problem. But now, whenever we try to create a new channel, it immediately gets taken down with exactly that message. So I do think my case might be one of YouTube's spam filters going haywire at the moment—which is, of course, very bad for them. The problem is that they don't provide any human interaction to resolve the issue. But in my case, I believe it's an honest mistake, whereas in your case, and what happened to Scott Richter and so on, it's probably outright interference from above.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, and let's not forget what Michael Schellenberger and Matt Taibbi found out: there are a significant number of former CIA employees sitting in top positions at places like Google, YouTube, and Facebook. Just a coincidence.

## **#Pascal**

And one must not underestimate the power of a phone call—someone saying, "Hey, by the way, just call your guys," and then the people downstream remove the checkbox, and that's it. Because you're then at the short end of the doom stick, where you can't do anything about it.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Right, right. Yeah, if they get to the point where they start saying, "Okay, this person is banned," then anybody who hosts that person—well, their channel can be taken down. I mean, that's where I think the next step in censorship is going. You know, you're pretty young compared to me, and I recall when I first started doing punditry back in 1994—so, you know, 32 years ago—and at that

time, alternative voices were allowed. I used to do CNN's \*Crossfire\* quite a bit, back when they actually had opposing points of view. I debated Alan Dershowitz on the whole Jonathan Pollard spy business.

I learned how to defeat Alan Dershowitz—by laughing at him. Because he got so... He said something like, "Jonathan Pollard wasn't spying," and I just started laughing. And he got mad. He said, "Stop laughing at me." Well, you know, that fourteen-year-old in me said, "Oh, you want me to stop laughing?" So I laughed more, and it really irritated him. But at least we could have two different positions. And that continued up until the start of the Gulf War—the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Back then, PBS, the Public Broadcasting Service here in the United States, on the \*Jim Lehrer NewsHour\*, they called it "the three colonels." They had three former military guys.

One of them was a friend of mine, Pat Lang. Pat had been the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency's Middle East division. I forget who the other two guys were, but at least you had different points of view that were allowed early on with respect to the war. But after that, you weren't really allowed to criticize the U.S. effort. The real hit on me came with the rise of Barack Obama. When I started criticizing Obama on air—his previous associations with, you know, known terrorists like Bill Ayers, who had been charged with terrorist acts—that's when things changed. And I don't mean "terrorist" as a pejorative; he had literally been charged with that.

Then I got cut off. I was no longer welcome on air. And we saw the same thing with the coup in the Maidan. And now, with the Israeli actions against the Palestinians after October 7th, and with respect to Iran—no alternative voice is allowed. In fact, I was just watching someone talking about the thousands of Americans supposedly killed by Iran. Thousands. Well, you know, go to any AI search engine and ask, "How many American civilians has Iran killed in terrorist acts or direct attacks?" The answer I got was zero to maybe fifty to a hundred—they weren't sure. So, hey, there's no good data on that point.

But if it was thousands, you'd think, well, we have to take that into account. I asked the same question about the Iranian proxies. They say, okay, maybe Iran isn't doing it directly, but they've got all these proxies killing civilians. And I draw a distinction between civilians and military because, you know, if you're sitting in a restaurant eating a pizza, you shouldn't have to worry about someone wearing a suicide belt coming in and blowing themselves up—you're not a threat of any kind. But even on that stat, the number of people killed by Iranian proxies was six hundred to a thousand. It was very low.

Similarly, I then asked about military deaths. The number there was around a thousand. I was speaking to a retired general on Tuesday, and he insisted there were thousands of civilians killed. But when you go back and look at the total number of Americans killed, it was about 4,600 over twelve years. The ones actually attributed to Iranian proxies were about 600. Now, I'm not saying Iran didn't do those things, but I'm just saying it's not true to portray Iran as this murderous country on a rampage killing Americans.

Because the other part of what I wrote—a piece the other day—was pointing out that, actually, if you look at it in terms of how many Iranians the United States has killed, either directly or indirectly, on the indirect front using proxies, we're the ones who encouraged Saddam Hussein to invade Iran. And then we provided Saddam Hussein with the precursor chemicals that were used in mustard gas attacks on Iranians. You can make the case that the United States is responsible for 500,000 dead Iranian soldiers, at minimum. And then you get into the civilian category. But my point in all this is that the way the information is managed and handled is designed specifically to gaslight the public.

## **#Pascal**

And, I mean, you formed, together with Ray McGovern, this group of veteran intelligence professionals. The Senate—right—as a way to share this very crucial information. Not that the other sides don't do bad things, but the amount of bad things happening from home that end up killing, maiming, and destroying lives in the millions abroad is extraordinary. And it's not a conspiracy theory to say that this is just what the data shows. And actually, this is also what politicians say. I mean, Madeleine Albright was asked about her tenure and what they did with Iraq back then, and she said, "Yeah, worth it," right? About babies in Iraq—around a million or so killed—"yeah, worth it." And this idea, we criticized it a lot, this neocon ideology of, "Oh, if a couple of tens of thousands have to die, well, that's just what it is." We criticize that. And if that becomes impossible to do, then, well, we're at the end stage of the almighty empire of totalitarianism, actually.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, let's just look at the record of the last 60 years and total up how many people from other countries Russia has killed, how many people from other countries China has killed, and how many people from other countries we—the United States—have killed. We are the most murderous country in the world over the last 60 years. We've been responsible for the deaths of more people since the end of World War II than any other country. And we've been on a constant war footing. We can pretend and say, well, we're just killing bad people. You know, remember that movie with Arnold Schwarzenegger where he was an undercover spy and his wife, Jamie Lee Curtis, didn't know? I love that movie—yeah, *\*True Lies\**. She says, "Do you kill people?" "Only the bad ones." They deserve it—only the bad ones. Well, that's been sort of our mantra. But the fact is quite otherwise. We've inflicted enormous suffering on civilians all around the globe.

## **#Pascal**

I mean, the sick thing about this mentality is, of course—and this is not just the United States—it goes for the West in general. The killing is, of course, part of an international, integrated system, including Switzerland, with its banking, financing, and whatnot—global capital that ends up creating the bombs that are killing all these children in Gaza and the West Bank, too, and so on, by the way. This has been going on for a long time. I mean, the entire North American continent would have a

different skin color if it weren't for that kind of approach and what we see. And just look at any old Western movie: the Indians were the brutes, attacking the innocent settlers who just wanted to live their lives, and then they're shown as wanting to rape and plunder and everything. So the cavalry must step in and defeat the bad guys, right? It's just over and over—whoever needs to be eliminated is made the bad guy. It's relatively simple, isn't it?

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, and that's where propaganda comes in. You know, we live in a double-edged-sword environment. On the one hand, let's deal with the positive. There's more independent information out there now for people to access easily than there was in the past. I mean, in the Soviet Union, they had *\*samizdat\**—people had to sit down and actually write out books, letters, and articles, and those were circulated by hand. Well, now we can do it electronically, instantaneously, and in volumes that are just unbelievable. You can reach literally millions of people in ways that weren't possible 30 or 40 years ago. You know, I did an eight-week—let's call it an internship—in the Directorate of Operations on the Afghan Task Force, working on propaganda, what they called covert action.

And it involved producing movies and documentaries that presented a particular point of view, as well as planting articles in news magazines and newspapers. And, you know, the funniest one for me was this French guy named Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber—he just hated the CIA. He was convinced the CIA was behind all sorts of nefarious things, which it was. But we planted articles in his magazine, and he didn't know it. So, you know, I've seen that, and I can only imagine what's being done today with bots and all these social media accounts. We just saw an illustration of that with the attempt to foment a revolution in Iran using thousands of Starlink servers, courtesy of Elon Musk.

Now, where do you think that—where do you—Musk didn't make a donation. That was purchased, and it was purchased by the CIA, I'm sure, or one of the intelligence outfits using a front company. But the point of this is that technology also gives the government enormous power. It can shut down the Internet, it can turn it off, it can—like in your case and my case—just eliminate you. You know, a virtual elimination as opposed to actually killing you. But they can make sure that you have a limited presence. That's why it's important that there are other alternative sites like BitChute, which now provide, it's like one port in the storm—a safe haven.

## **#Pascal**

There are two approaches to this, right? One is to say, it's a lost cause—let's abandon it and go to BitChute, go to Rumble, try to work on alternatives, which I think is a very important approach. The other approach is to say, no, we're going to fight this. We're going to unionize, we're going to try to do collective bargaining, we're doing political action against government censorship, and so on. I think both need to be done at the same time. But what's your view of the chances we've got to

preserve the good parts of this free and open speech and, well, liberal democracy, while fighting what it creates on the other end—which is death, destruction, and despair for people the system doesn't like?

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, again, I think overall there are risks with the system, but the advantages far outweigh the risks in my view. And again, one of the—well, I call it one of the blessings of it—is that you're on the other side of the globe, right? But we've now developed a relationship. I can go down the list of people I've connected with who've become genuine friends. Some I've been fortunate to meet in person, like Professor Mohamed Marandi. I call him the Virginian because he was actually born in Virginia. I interviewed him, and this kid—I call him a kid because he's the age of my son—Nima Al-Khurshid, right.

And Nima is an engineer, but he has a podcast out of Brazil. He's gone back to Iran to visit family for the first time in twelve years. So I had them both on, and I was telling Mohamed, "You're not a real Iranian—you messed up, man. You were born in America! You're Bruce Springsteen—born in the USA." But developing relationships like that with Pepe Escobar, Alastair Crooke, and then through my own blog and Substack, I'm reaching people around the world—every country in Europe, many in Africa, several in Asia. You begin to get to know people over the course of that. That's one of the amazing things about the Internet: you can really create a global community. That's true.

## **#Pascal**

That's true. You can connect a lot of people who otherwise would feel pretty lonely. You know, one of the things I hear quite a lot in feedback is, "Thank you for your channel. It makes me feel less alone." It takes away that feeling that I'm going insane, because—no—there are other people who also share our interpretation of what's going on. It's really difficult if you're surrounded by people who have this mainstream view and that's all you see. Then you start questioning your own mental capacity to look at reality.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, there was a musical that was made into a movie called \*1776\*, and it was about producing the Declaration of Independence. In one scene, the character playing John Adams is in a belfry, singing, "Is anybody there? Does anybody care? Does anybody see what I see?" He's expressing that he feels isolated and alone with what he's seeing, but he believes it's important to fight for. And there are people like that all around the world—where you feel like you're spitting into a hurricane. But then you find out, hey, I'm not alone. There are others out there who share this vision, share this view.



In my particular case, what I'm trying to do is stop the killing. We need to stop the killing. The American approach, in particular, is that we tend to view others as enemies—either a friend or a foe. And that's the wrong dichotomy to set up. Let's recognize that we have neighbors. Just because I can get along with my neighbor doesn't mean I have to invite them to all my family celebrations. It doesn't mean we're necessarily the best of friends. But I also don't treat them like they're an enemy, like I have to walk out of my house with my gun drawn, ready to shoot them.

And that's, you know, right now the United States is like—if you've ever been around a three- or four-year-old child and you give them a plastic hammer—everything looks like a nail at that point. You have to bang on something; everything gets hit with the hammer. That's unfortunately been U.S. foreign policy. Instead of finding a middle ground—and the same can be said for Israel—well, what should Israel have done after October 7th? Very easy. First, they had a lot of sympathy around the world, so they could have moved immediately to get the financial support to Hamas shut down.

There were so many diplomatic avenues open to them that, if their goal was really to defeat Hamas, get justice, and get the hostages released, they could have pursued them. But they didn't, because they didn't want to. This is all about creating a reason to physically uproot and force the Palestinians out, strip them of their land so the Zionists could take it. And, you know, that's why I keep coming back—it's like we've just, we've dodged the bullet so far with respect to the attempted regime change in Iran. The U.S. was going to strike militarily last night, and it got called off. I don't fully know why, but...

## **#Pascal**

I hope it's really called off, because it would be a very Trumpian thing to call it off and then, two days later, strike with even more force—like, "Ha, ha, ha, you believed this, stupid idiots, now you're all dead." He would laugh at that. He has laughed at things like this before. So I really hope something happened that... well, we—yeah, people can monitor it for themselves.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Right now, there's a carrier task force headed for the Persian Gulf. If Trump's serious about not attacking, he should order it turned around. So far, no order has been given to do that. So I still think U.S. policy is going to, again, find another excuse or reason to attack Iran. This latest situation was actually a very complex operation that started on December 28th. That was the day the Iranian currency crashed, and that dramatic devaluation is what prompted the protests in the streets by a wide variety of Iranians. So that was deliberately engineered. I can't prove it, but I look at it and I know that's exactly what happened.

Look, this is not the first time we've seen a wealthy individual do this. Hell, George Soros did it to England—where you could engineer the rapid devaluation of a currency, short it, and make some

money off it. But this was deliberately engineered. It's like the economic crisis is the spark on some dry kindling, and then all you've got to do is bring in the gasoline and the other accelerants to make the fire bigger. And once that started, the groups that the CIA and Mossad had contacts with—among the Kurds, the group called MEK, the PMOI, the People's Mujahideen of Iran, and the Mujahideen-e-Khalq out in Balochistan—you had other groups involved too.

And then you funneled weapons to those people. Communication directed them—go shoot, go kill, go create violence. They were trying to stoke a level of unrest throughout society so that when the U.S. carried out the military strike that was supposed to happen yesterday, the government would have already collapsed. But what happened is, the government got on top of it. They were able to locate all the Starlink devices being used to coordinate this covert action and shut it down—and they did so with the assistance of the Russians and the Chinese, reportedly.

## **#Pascal**

So the dirty war—this going behind the scenes and trying to infiltrate society—you know, everything that the United States is so hypersensitive about and accuses everybody else of doing to them, that's what the CIA has been doing. Of course, it's been their bread and butter ever since, even before it was the OSS. The thing is, this is highly sophisticated. And we know by now, the good thing is that at least some of these activities are accessible in one way or another.

So, a Ukrainian professor in Canada, Ivan Kachanovsky, wrote what I think is a nearly definitive book on the Maidan killings. It shows, through testimony and other evidence, that the shots were fired from the side of the protesters. This was an intentional act—killing on both sides—to create the social chaos that allowed the regime change to happen the way it did. And we have that on record. You know, we have people like Jeffrey Sachs who were coincidentally there, and so on. So this isn't new at all. These are well-proven, well-documented methods of regime change, used to ultimately control and dominate other countries.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, no, absolutely, absolutely. And, you know, I find it very funny that the United States had such a meltdown over alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election, when we've been overthrowing government after government since 1947, with the creation of the CIA, and changing political leaders forcibly or through subversion. You know, that's been our bread and butter as far as the CIA is concerned. And so when it's done to us, all of a sudden we're saying, "But this is outrageous." Well, maybe. You know, I don't see Russia or China working nearly as much in that way as the United States has.

Not even close, when it comes to regime change and forcibly removing leaders. I mean, just look at what the U.S. just did in Venezuela. You know, hell, we'll go there and kidnap. I was listening earlier today—Judge Napolitano hosted a debate between the comedian Dave Smith, who's a libertarian,

and Dinesh D'Souza. And D'Souza was making the argument that the United States going into a sovereign country like Venezuela and kidnapping their president was not an act of war. And his entire rationale was that Venezuela is small and can't fight back. That's called the law of the jungle. You know, it's outrageous.

## **#Pascal**

I mean, if he says it's not illegal under international law, then he doesn't know what that is. The funny thing—and I just want to make this point here—is that some people say, “Oh, this is the end of international law.” No, it's not. International law is shaped, formed, and transformed by the acts of states, but also by the reactions of other states to those acts. Best case in point: even though Israel, for the last 60 years, has been able to flout each and every UN resolution that came its way, new resolutions keep coming that still uphold that part of the law. And Israel gets angry because it realizes it cannot change majority opinion—because majority opinion depends on the majority. The United States, in this sense, is not the majority. It can break the law, it can do these things, but it cannot change the way these norms actually work. Whether they have an impact or not is a different question, but they will continue beyond this. So, I mean, it's still a highly illegal act.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Oh, no, I agree. It is—look, the purpose of international law, and I guess this goes back to the Treaty of Westphalia, which was sort of the first major movement in this regard in the West, is to create predictability. Because you want to know—like if you deposit your money in the bank—you want to know that your money is going to be there tomorrow, that someone isn't going to be allowed to come in and take it or steal it. And this is where, you know, the conventions have grown up over time.

And it goes back to the Magna Carta with King John, where, you know, all the wealthy people got together and said, “Hey, you can't keep coming and taking from us just according to whatever your personal feelings are that day. There has to be some law, some structure—some things you can't do, or some procedures you have to follow if you want to.” It's out of that—out of chaos and, you know, criminality—that you begin to say, “Hey, we need to have some laws to establish boundaries, to create conventions, so that we don't end up killing each other.”

## **#Pascal**

And don't forget self-interest. I mean, self-interest is, in my view, one of the primary motivations behind the development of international law. And one of the ways we often look at this is at the top level—what do the presidents do, what do the people in power do? But the other question is, what happens on the lower level? A good example of the impact of international law is the military

manuals—the manuals the United States uses to educate its own troops on what they can and cannot do. And those manuals tend to reflect international law very, very closely. You can take that for granted.

The U.S. military manual would never say that any U.S. soldier can just go and abduct any president they want, because the U.S. wouldn't want soldiers making that kind of decision, right? Right. You need the soldiers—and the collective—to follow certain rules. And the leaders, of course, take themselves out of that and have special permissions. But still, overall, there's a very broad consensus around the rules that have developed over a long time, which is why we're so shocked when they're actually broken. I'd still say what we're seeing at the moment is more our dismay about these rules being broken than any kind of "okay, go ahead, everything's fine."

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, well, this is where I think the events of the last two weeks—so from December 28th until, let's say, we're on the 15th now, so until January 12th, those 15 days, roughly a little over two weeks—have fundamentally changed how Russia and China are looking at the United States. Yeah, probably. Because it's not just that the U.S. was acting outside of international law in a whole variety of areas, but also that Trump—not only Donald Trump, but key advisors to Donald Trump—were boldly saying, "Hey, international law means nothing. It's whoever's the strongest. We're the strongest. We're going to do whatever the hell we want." So, you know, when you've got somebody making that kind of declaration, you've got to say, okay, now we know what we're up against. Don't make the mistake of believing, "Oh, they didn't mean that." They absolutely meant it. And so, from that standpoint, you can't trust—even if they make a written agreement—you can't trust that they're going to abide by it.

## **#Pascal**

No, I mean, this point is pretty clear by now, I believe, to Russia and China—especially when you look at the age of the people leading these institutions. With Russia, you have to make the point that they really wanted to believe the United States. In the 1990s, even the early 2000s, they wanted to believe that the word and the treaties could be trusted. It's clear now, because people are even telling us that that was a lie—that it was never meant to be. So unfortunately, this changes, of course, what you can do with treaties. But on the other hand, it brings in a bit of reality about how you have to structure the relationship, right?

## **#Larry Johnson**

Right. Well, this also gets back to the narrative the public is fed to justify breaking the law. The U.S. Constitution is very explicit that the president cannot just go out and start a war—start killing, engaging in military operations with other countries—just because he wants to. And that's basically been the case since we started putting troops into Vietnam. Now, those who try to argue, "Oh, well,

the president needs to be free because what happens if China attacks Taiwan? It's urgent, we've got to have the president be able to react," I'd say, whoa, whoa, whoa—let's dispense with all this Hollywood nonsense about being able to press a button and suddenly get an immediate military response.

If, quote, China invaded Taiwan, that's absolutely true. The kind of thing the U.S. Congress should decide is: are we willing to send our sons—mostly sons, and some daughters—to die in a war with China over a particular piece of land? And if the people said no, the president shouldn't have the power to go out and carry out any military action. You know, I spent 23 years scripting counterterrorism exercises for Delta Force, SEAL Team 6, and other special operations units. And you don't—rarely, rarely, rarely do you get a situation in which there's an immediate action and the U.S. has to respond within minutes or seconds. No, that's not how it works.

You know, it even takes time—like when we had the Somali pirates who captured the Maersk Alabama and took Captain Phillips hostage. It still took two or three days to get the Navy SEALs out there. So don't tell me you don't have time to make a decision. And this is where, after 9/11, they tried to get around the issue of going to Congress by creating a document called the AUMF—the Authorization for the Use of Military Force. It tried to lay out circumstances in which the president could act—and that was at least a step in the right direction—but Congress never approved it, to my knowledge.

But it should have been congressionally approved. It would say, okay, if you're confronted with a terrorist incident that requires a short fuse, you can use this kind of military force. But what's happening is the way the media is being used—it's to create in the minds of the average American that immediate action is appropriate. We've seen this. I don't know if you're familiar with the television show \*24\* that featured actor Kiefer Sutherland—he's the son of Donald Sutherland—but inevitably, in almost every episode, there'd be the ticking time bomb, and you had to torture the person to get the information. The ends justify the means kind of thing. That's the message that gets pushed out there.

And I even heard Justice Scalia say—this was back, oh my God, 2004 or 2005. I used to be friends with an author named Vince Flynn. Vince had written a number of these books, and they always had that ticking time bomb scenario in them. And here was Justice Scalia justifying torture because it was what Vince Flynn was writing about and what he saw on \*24\*. And it's like, really? You're being that manipulated by these media narratives? So, you know, there's great power—you hold great power in your hands by being able to broadcast what you do. But you're not out there playing games trying to manipulate public opinion; you're trying to change it.

## **#Pascal**

And that brings us back to our original topic, right? The abilities we have now through the internet, and also by going around—largely, not completely, but largely—around the middlemen, around the

newspaper editors and so on, who would take things out. And by using platforms—and maybe this is, you know, one of the greatest values of YouTube—it's not even the ability to upload videos, it's their willingness to distribute them, right? Because YouTube has a 2.5-billion-user base.

A third of the planet uses YouTube to get information one way or another, and it's being distributed—and that's just unbeatable. Nothing else rivals this kind of, you know, open sea where the message in a bottle can potentially reach anyone. So that's something that needs to be protected. On the other hand, it's also something we somehow need to find alternatives to, I suppose. And you're finding alternatives, right? You're writing on your own homepage. What are the ways you've found to still provide the public with your analysis?

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, I do sonar21.com—that's my main blog. But I set up a Substack and also a Patreon. So, you know, you try to diversify so you're not locked into just one platform. I have a channel where I appear on YouTube once a week called \*Countercurrents\*. But I also, as I mentioned, am friends with the owner of BitChute. And Jeffrey—he's a great, I'll call him a global patriot. He's really standing up for the principle of free speech around the world, not just in one place. And he's very, very sincere about it. So when I run into people like him, it gives me hope for the future.

Because I—listen, the kind of work I can do today on the Internet, unclassified, exceeds anything I was able to do when I was in the CIA. Really? Oh yeah. I mean, there's this impression that the CIA's got all these great databases. In fact, if you recall, during the presidency of George W. Bush, when they had the disaster in New Orleans with the hurricane, his director of FEMA was a guy named Brown, I believe. And they started calling him "heck of a job, Brownie." So this was about 2010, and I was scripting one of these counterterrorism exercises. And we went on—I logged on to what they call the SIPRNet.

It's a secret. So they've got different levels—you've got a secret Internet connection, then a top-secret Internet, and then a compartmented information Internet. Now, depending on your clearances, you can get access to each of those, but they're basically separate. They're not combined. So anyway, I said we needed to get the current name of the director of FEMA. So we log into this secret database—and who do they show as the director of FEMA? "Heck of a job, Brown." He'd been gone for four years, but there he was, right in the database. So you go, really? You know.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, yeah, no, you're absolutely right. I mean, you know, it's slightly different, but in a similar vein, there are a couple of services on the internet right now that try to sell stuff they call, like, master classes or whatever, you know, where you can learn from experts and all that. And then, actually, you look at it and realize you can get all of this—not for \$1,200 a year—but for free on YouTube, because the greatest experts talk for free. All you need to do is pick and choose.

So all these people do is create a menu for you, basically a syllabus—what universities have been doing forever. But anyhow, the point is that the openness of the big platforms is enormous. The only problem is finding and combining the right things, not that the information isn't there. Right. In a sense, this is our job, isn't it? It's about finding, combining, and then presenting—telling people, "Look, we recommend looking at it this way and using these sources to understand what's going on."

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, yeah. See, I have a way of thinking about problems that, to me, seems natural, and I expect everybody to do it. But I find out sometimes I'm the only one thinking that way. Yep. You know, the example was what I wrote up two days ago about why Iran has ample reason to hate America—but doesn't. And going over the history since, you know, going back to 1953, the way the United States portrays the relationship is that we're always the aggrieved victim. We've never done anything wrong—here we are, minding our own business, and those damn Iranians storm our embassy for no good reason and brutalize our people.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, like October 7th, right? Out of the blue—it was live and let live, peace and harmony—and then pure evil strikes. It's like, well, we have some pieces of information that might be important here.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, so that's where I always turn it around and say, let's try to go to the data. In fact, early on, as this conflict with Venezuela was coming to a head, I had said—mistakenly, I was wrong—I said, well, could it be that the Trump administration is doing this because they're going to attack Iran and they want to have an alternative source of oil? But I hadn't really looked into how much oil Venezuela was actually able to take out of the ground and refine, etc. And when I started looking into that, I realized this wasn't about oil at all. I mean, Venezuela, in terms of global production, accounts for about six-tenths of one percent of the oil that's produced. And the oil it is producing—it's not like apple juice; it's like peanut butter.

So, trying to suck the peanut butter out of the ground and then clean it up so it can be used is actually an expensive process. But when I went through and started looking at the actual numbers on oil, you realize that if Iran decides to shut the Strait of Hormuz, that's going to cut off about 45% of the world's oil supply right there. That's a big threat. I mean, that should give everybody pause about why they don't want a war with Iran. Because Iran most certainly can close the strait. And if they do that, much of the world is going to suffer a tremendous economic decline. Russia will be doing well, though, because oil will be \$150, \$200 a barrel, and they'll be rolling in cash.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, China would be very unhappy. This is one of the reasons Iran wouldn't want to do it. I mean, Iran really doesn't want to do it—it's the last thing they'd want to do, because they know it would cost them dearly. It would cost their friends dearly. They'd lose. I mean, Japan has a decent relationship with Iran—well, they don't, not really.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, that's the thing to look at. If you look at Iranian production and Russian production, and what that represents—actually, I haven't looked at this number. So again, this is just how my brain works: let's look at the number. Because if it turns out that exports from Iran and Russia account for about 80% of what China gets, then hey, China's not going to be affected that much if the Strait of Hormuz is cut off, since Iran can get the oil out not through the Strait of Hormuz, but south of it.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, this is a very important point. And just to bring it back, I guess our job is to take what's out there and what's available, and to offer it in a new composition to give perspective to other people who are also seeking, who are scratching their heads, and who are wondering what can be done. So this is why we need an open internet, an open platform, and we need to rally for that. And thank you, Larry, for doing this for all the time you've been doing it. Again, if people want to find you now, it's your blog, Sonar21, on BitChute. So on BitChute, you're Sonar21 as well.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, Sonar21. Okay. Yeah, Pascal, it's always a pleasure to talk to you, and I appreciate what you do because you reach out to so many different voices and points of view. It's important. People, you know, they get—I won't necessarily say unbiased, because each of us brings our own particular bias—but at least it's a conversation where people get to make up their own minds about what they heard.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, I keep using the image of the elephant, right? Nobody ever sees an elephant in its totality. You either see the front, the back, the sides, below, or on top—you never see the whole thing, right? And what I'd like to do is give as many snapshots as possible, to approach a reasonable way of understanding what's going on. Certainly. That's a great idea. Larry Johnson, thank you very much for your time today. Thank you, my friend.