

Iran War Sparks WW3; Xueqin Predicts US COLLAPSE

Prof. Jiang Xueqin argues that historical patterns and game theory can accurately predict events in the future. Prof. Jiang outlines his predictions for the US Iran War in 2026, U.S. empire collapse and the Trump era. Prof. Jiang is the host of the popular educational channel Predictive History.

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#Danny

It's just so clear now, Professor Zhang, what the playbook is, as you said. Where does Iran fit into this larger picture, then? Because there's a situation the United States is facing that even the mainstream media is talking about — that the U.S. military can't do everything at once. They're talking about how the hotspots around the globe mean heightened risk, that any retaliation could succeed. They're referencing Iran, but really talking about the whole world and how the U.S. military is indeed everywhere, Professor Zhang.

And it just so happens that one of the main reasons a strike didn't occur was because the Israelis supposedly said, "We don't have enough air defenses rebuilt from the 12-day war that were provided to us." And there aren't aircraft carriers here to support a long-term strike, because a lot of them have been moved to the Caribbean or remain in the Pacific. So, how—where does Iran ultimately fit? Because last time I checked, the National Security Strategy, Professor Zhang said that the U.S. empire is supposed to be controlling the Western Hemisphere and moving out of this region, and yet here we are talking about Iran.

#Xueqin

Right. So I think, first and foremost, there's this misinterpretation of what the National Security Strategy actually says. I've read it. It doesn't say that America is going to retreat back into the Western Hemisphere and leave Asia and Europe to other powers, creating what I call spheres of influence. It doesn't say that. What the National Security Strategy says is, number one, that America will no longer abide by these liberal, multilateral organizations like the United Nations, which have hampered American power. So America now thinks that these organizations, which basically justify

the American empire, are useless, and that from now on it will be “might is right.” We will act unilaterally. We will act in what we see as our best national self-interest. That’s number one. Number two, it states explicitly that the Western Hemisphere belongs to America.

This is what’s called the Trump corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, or the Donrow Doctrine. It states that very clearly. Number three is that it will strangle China economically. All right, so the idea is you can’t fight China in Southeast Asia militarily—that would be suicidal. You’d be fighting China on its home front. So what you do is blockade China economically, okay? That basically means taking control of the Western Hemisphere and cutting off valuable resources to China, which includes oil, of course, but also lithium, copper, and silver—crucial for high tech, including solar panels, AI, and EVs. Basically, you can’t have a high-tech industry without these rare earth and other critical minerals. And most of these mineral supplies actually come from the Western Hemisphere, so that’s number one.

Number two is that the United States will also contest China in Africa. China is gaining a foothold there mainly because it’s actually building up Africa’s infrastructure, and Africans like that. But what the Americans are saying is, “No, we will not surrender Africa to China. We will challenge China in Africa.” Number three is the idea that, from an American perspective, if you’re an ally, all your resources, all your manpower, all your wealth belong to America. That’s implied in the National Security Strategy, which means that essentially Japan is a vassal state to America. Both South Korea and Japan are vassal states. It also means that all those billions of dollars Japan holds in U.S. Treasury bonds actually belong to America. They’re not Japanese; they don’t belong to the Japanese people.

It belongs to America. So the National Security Strategy outlines how to maintain the American empire, and how the empire needs to transition from a focus on soft power—on building consensus and working through multilateral organizations—to one of hard power, actually using military strength to project force, contain China, and maintain control over supply lines. And the other thing the National Security Strategy says that’s very important is that it basically gives up on Europe. It’s saying that Europe, strategically, is not valuable to the United States. Why? Because, number one, it has an aging population, so there’s not much manpower. It doesn’t have resources. It’s a welfare state dependent on American military protection. And the Europeans are too focused on DEI, too focused on world politics.

And so the National Security Strategy calls for either the battlement of Europe or the undermining of Western Europe, favoring the rise of right-wing regimes in Eastern Europe that would be much more amenable to American power—countries like Poland, Hungary, and Austria. So that’s what the National Security Strategy says. And once we understand that, we understand what’s going on in the world—why Trump is doing what he’s doing in the Caribbean, why he’s doing what he’s doing in Iran. A lot of it is to maintain the American empire, and a lot of it is to strangle China economically, to basically blockade China. China is blockaded on its eastern front by the first island chain, and that’s why it doesn’t really have a blue-water navy.

And if Iran were to fall, then China would be blockaded on its western front as well, okay? So a lot of it is geared toward China. I'm not saying this is the primary reason, but China is definitely a consideration. So this is the strategy. The problem is that it's schizophrenic and confusing because—why are you sending a third of your naval assets to the Caribbean to bomb fishing vessels and kidnap Maduro, and at the same time calling for regime change in Iran? From an American perspective, it's insane what America is doing. A lot of people didn't believe that Trump would actually strike Iran because the naval assets weren't in place yet.

They had to get the ships from Korea all the way back to the Middle East. If you keep doing this, you're just going to exhaust the military. The military can't just move back and forth on a whim—it takes months of planning, and it's extremely expensive. These sailors need rest. I mean, Trump is just going to exhaust the American military. Trump is not a planner. Look at it this way, okay? He had the most successful TV show for the longest time, **The Apprentice**, so he's very good at creating TV ratings. At the same time, every business he touched—whether it was casinos or restaurants—he bankrupted it. So this is a guy who's concerned first and foremost about optics.

He doesn't really care about fundamentals—the fundamentals of business, the fundamentals of the military. And that's why I think by 2026 it's just going to be exhausting. Like, okay, we know what he's trying to do, but it doesn't make any military sense. Strategically, militarily, geopolitically—it's just idiotic. Why are you pissing off the Europeans, who are your allies? Why are you threatening the Canadians, who are your allies? Why are you saying, "I'm going to go for regime change in Iran," when you don't actually have the capacity to do so? Your generals tell you, "We can't do that." Why are you kidnapping Maduro, which is a direct insult to the sovereignty of the South Americans? None of this makes sense.

But again, the problem is that Trump is first and foremost concerned about optics—looking like a great, conquering hero. So he's interested in cheap, easy wins, like Maduro. Greenland would be a cheap, easy win for him. Then Cuba would probably be a cheap, easy win for him. He's not interested in these long, protracted conflicts that might backfire on him. But what he's doing is really just delaying the inevitable, right? Because eventually you're going to have to go to war with Iran. And the further you spread yourself out, it's what we call pure overstretch, right? You're going to end up in this final boss fight with Iran, which is going to happen sooner or later. So what's happening in the world—it's just moronic, right?

#Danny

Maybe we can game-theory this imperial overstretch, because that's exactly what the Atlantic piece I have here talks about. And, you know, Professor Zhang, we've talked about the U.S. military not being able to do everything in these hot spots. How does the possibility of a full-scale war with Iran factor into this now? How does it change things? Because it wasn't too long ago that we weren't really talking about a full-scale war with Iran being imminent. And now there's a lot of momentum, a

lot of pressure to do so. But we've also talked about the Venezuela situation here—the kidnapping operation—which hasn't led to full regime change and has angered Venezuelans. They're in the streets every single day, showing how angry they are about that.

There's a large military and naval presence in the Caribbean that's very expensive and doesn't really seem sustainable. And then, as you've pointed out, there's the effort to isolate China and maybe, to an extent, Russia. But if we look at China, all these flashpoints—from Greenland to Venezuela to Iran—are connected. If the U.S., if the Trump administration only succeeds optically, from my understanding, China isn't really interested in optics. They're interested in actually doing business and getting things done. It seems like these operations that are so focused on optics could actually have the opposite effect, which is to isolate the U.S. even more. What do you think? Is the U.S.—the empire—going to become more isolated by 2026?

#Xueqin

I think the best historical analogy for what's happening today is found in **The History of the Peloponnesian War**. It's a book written by Thucydides, an Athenian general who tried to analyze the thirty-year war between Sparta and Athens that ultimately destroyed the Athenian Empire. He lists the mistakes the Athenians made that led to their downfall—and they're the same kinds of mistakes the Americans are making now, okay? After the Persian Wars, Athens came across as the savior of the Greek world across the Aegean. It's very similar to how, after World War II, Europeans thanked America for saving Europe from fascism. But there was also fear among Europeans that the U.S. would abandon them, like it did after World War I. So they created NATO, with the idea that America would always maintain a military presence in Europe and defend it against the Soviet Union.

And you could argue that, as part of this deal, they created something called the Bretton Woods Agreement, okay? The idea of the Bretton Woods Agreement was that the U.S. dollar would become the global reserve currency to facilitate global trade. And to make sure the Americans wouldn't abuse this exorbitant privilege, the U.S. dollar was pegged to gold, okay? So that was the agreement after World War II. The problem is, by 1971, America was bankrupt. It had spent billions funding this pointless war in Vietnam. It was also funding the Great Society—Lyndon Johnson's Great Society—which was a great program for Americans but was also bankrupting the country. And America had spent billions on the space race too, sending a man to the moon.

So by 1971, America was bankrupt. Nixon basically said, "You know what? I know we promised to pay everyone back in U.S. gold in exchange for U.S. dollars, but forget that. The U.S. dollar will not be pegged to anything. Too bad." Just imagine U.S. dollars as a tax you pay in order to be free. After the Soviet Union fell, everyone had no choice but to buy into this system, and it created over-financialization in the U.S. economy. It allowed the rich to get richer and the poor to remain poor. Basically, America became very lazy and shifted its manufacturing to China. And because of all this, we're in the situation we are today, where America is living off the rent it collects from the rest of the world.

It basically colonizes the entire world, and the mechanism it uses to do this is, of course, the U.S. dollar. And this worked fine until 2022, when Putin invaded Ukraine and showed that he was willing to challenge America. But not only that—the Americans weaponized their financial system to sanction Russia. The classic example, of course, is SWIFT. They basically knocked Russia off SWIFT and sanctioned it, but it failed. It showed that the U.S. financial system isn't as powerful as people imagined. The other thing America did, which was really stupid, was seize about \$200 billion in Russian assets.

So this is money that the Russian central bank had stored in Europe and America, and basically America said, "Nope, it's ours—you can't touch it anymore, okay?" And this caused massive panic around the world, because if you put your money into America, you do so because you think it's protected by law. And if America can just seize your money for any reason, then people aren't willing to put their money into America anymore. So this caused the Japanese, the Chinese—basically everyone—to start buying more gold and exchanging their U.S. Treasuries for gold. So basically, another way of saying this is that America is this corrupt empire that insists on collecting rent from everyone.

People are sick of paying this extortion, and they're rebelling against it, so America is using force. This is the same thing the Athenians did back then—it turned their allies into vassal states, and eventually into enemies as well. And that's what we're seeing in Europe today, where these former vassal states have come to see that America is actually a real threat to their peace and prosperity, not Russia. But the other thing that's really interesting about all this—okay, it's really interesting—is that while this is happening, while America is fighting these stupid—sorry—while the Athenians are fighting these stupid wars overseas, the Athenians also engaged in a civil war.

And the reason why is that you have this massive oligarchy that comes into being because of all the corruption. And this oligarchy—well, they're fighting among themselves for status. We're actually seeing the same situation in America, where, if you think about it, what's happening in Washington is basically a civil war between the deep-state establishment that's financial—Wall Street—and the group that came to power through the Clinton and Obama years. Now, what Trump represents is sort of the new money: the Silicon Valley, AI, surveillance-state elite, okay? The people like Peter Thiel, Elon Musk, Sam Altman, Palantir, and so on.

So that's the conflict that's happening. And I think a lot of this domestic political conflict in America is driven by that deeper divide within the oligarchy. We've seen this pattern before, and it ultimately leads to—what? It leads, first, to a revolution in Athens; second, to the entire world unifying against Athens; and third, to the defeat of Athens. I think a similar pattern will play out today, where there's a civil war or revolution in America, and the entire world unifies against it because they see America as the greatest threat to world peace. And finally, this will lead to the demise of the American empire.

#Danny

We already have two flashpoints in 2026 that have exploded in many ways: Venezuela and Iran. And Iran is not done—neither is Venezuela. From my estimation, Professor Jiang, the Trump administration essentially conducted a kidnapping operation, left the same government in power, and now there are millions upon millions of people who support the current government in Venezuela, very angry that their leader was taken from them. And in the context of the regional situation—which I've said before on the show, Professor Jiang—the situation in Latin America and South America was not necessarily unfavorable to the United States before this. I know you have opinions on where that's going to go. So, in terms of the future of the American empire, this is a major focus now between Iran and Venezuela. How do these two contexts, you know, kind of shape the future of the American empire or lay the foundations for it in 2026?

#Xueqin

Okay, well, let's give Trump the benefit of the doubt, okay? And let's say there's actually a strategy here, and the end game, of course, is Iran. America has to go invade Iran at some point. Now, if you invade Iran, there's a huge problem, because Iran's going to cut off the Strait of Hormuz, and that's going to collapse the East Asian economies—South Korea, Japan, China. China depends on about 50% of its oil imports from the Middle East. So if there's a war going on, and this war could last for years and years, right, how do you compensate for the fact that these East Asian economies are going to collapse and they'll be dragged into the war as well?

Well, okay, you can use Venezuela and North America—the United States and Canada—to compensate for the loss of oil in the Middle East, right? That's why you need to secure Venezuela, because you're anticipating this massive conflict in the Middle East. So you need to modernize the Venezuelan oil industry to make sure these Asian economies don't implode and aren't dragged into the war, especially Japan, China, and South Korea. That's the strategy, okay? The problem is, you're assuming the people of Venezuela are just going to sit back and let you steal their oil and resources, and allow Trump to impose a government—a regime—that only obeys the Americans.

You know, some Americans have a long memory of that much-despised Yankee imperialism, right? Like, you know, thousands—tens of thousands—of people were killed by these military juntas controlled by the CIA. Chile is a classic example, where the democratically elected government led by Allende was overthrown by General Pinochet, who was backed by Kissinger and the CIA. So South Americans do not like American interference. What this is going to do, even though it may make long-term strategic sense, is piss off the South American people. It's going to rally the Venezuelan people. Eventually, in Venezuela, in a few months' time, you're going to have a general election.

This general election will be heavily contested, and America will be forced to send boots on the ground to maintain stability in Caracas. And then this will trigger guerrilla warfare. So... I understand, geopolitically, it does make sense what's happening in Venezuela, right? But the way it's being handled means that eventually you get mission creep, and you end up in a situation like

Vietnam, which is going to exhaust the American empire. So I know we're saying this in the short term—in a two-year time frame, all this makes sense, and Americans will feel that Trump has control, that Trump is this great conquering hero who will make America great again.

In the long term, America is going to suffer tremendous blowback—not only in Venezuela, but throughout the Caribbean and across Latin and South America. So it's really the end of empire. Listen, the Americans could have done this at any point. In fact, in a single day, America could go and topple every regime in South America. They have that military capacity. You don't do that because it's reckless, because it's suicidal, because you just piss people off. You're angering hundreds of millions of people. You're unifying them. You're giving them a reason to fight against you.

#Danny

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, you said there's a long history, Professor Jung, of this kind of behavior—pissing off people in South America, Latin America, the Caribbean. Now, the Trump administration, the United States—they're not ones to hide. And I think this is a big problem for the American empire. They're not ones to hide how exactly they want to do things. We've heard repeatedly from the Trump administration, with regard to Iran, for example, and now Venezuela too, that they want quick, decisive blows. So they want to kind of have their cake and eat it too.

How do you see this playing out now in the rest of 2020? Because if the Trump administration is going to try to move in with overwhelming force—or sneak attacks, kidnapping operations, coups, that sort of thing—those have a high risk of not succeeding, as we've already seen twice in just the first month of 2020. What does this mean, then, or how does this portend for the rest of the year, given that the Trump administration wants quick, decisive blows? It sounds like they're going to try to land more than a few in the weeks and months to come.

#Xueqin

So that's exactly Trump's mentality—he wants quick victories to create the image that he's Julius Caesar, this great conquering hero who will restore the American empire to its greatness. And quite honestly, most Americans actually support his imperial ambitions. I mean, that's just reality on the ground. Polls may say something different, but in their hearts, most Americans aspire to an imperial greatness. It's just human nature. The reality, though, is that Iran's not going to fall. I mean, yes, it looks unstable. It's been depressed because of American sanctions for decades. But the mullahs are much more resilient, much more resourceful, much more creative than Americans give them credit for.

So Iran's not going to fall. What's going to happen is that Trump's going to get frustrated with the situation in Iran and shift his focus elsewhere—which includes Greenland, right? Greenland is a quick, easy victory because there's really nothing the Europeans can do about it. If Trump just says,

"Listen, I'm going to annex Greenland," no one can stop him. The Germans, the French, the Swedes, and the Norwegians might say, "We'll militarily defend Greenland." So what do they do? Well, Germany sends 15 soldiers to Greenland, the French send 13 soldiers to Greenland—and guess what? There are already 150 American troops in Greenland.

So the idea that the Europeans can actually resist this American annexation of Greenland is just ridiculous. So that's a quick victory. Another quick victory for Trump would be Canada. The Canadian housing market has collapsed, there have been massive layoffs this year, and you'll have certain areas—Alberta is the most obvious example—that are going to vote to secede from Canada. Then maybe 20% of Albertans will vote to actually join the United States, okay? But Trump doesn't care. For him, it's like 100%, right? Twenty percent equals 100% in his worldview. And he's going to threaten Canada and say, "Either you give us Alberta, or we're going to come invade you." And this is going to create a lot of TV drama, which is what Trump thrives on.

So that's also another quick, easy victory for Trump—Alberta. And then another quick, easy victory is Cuba. Because what's happening is that Cuba's energy lifeline is Venezuela. Without Venezuela, basically Cuba goes dark. It can't even have electricity, okay? So Cuba would also be another quick, easy victory. I think these are the three easiest right now, and then eventually you'll build up. Because the problem with these quick, easy victories is that they create hubris. They make you self-delusional and believe that you're invincible, okay? But I think Iran will be much more resilient than Trump believes, and he'll get frustrated and move on somewhere else.