

The USA Has No Idea About Iran | Nima R. Alkhorshid

The USA has no idea about how Iran works. This war will be its great downfall. Support us on substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> This video was filmed on February 27, 2026.

#Pascal

Welcome, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz. I'm an associate professor at Kyoto University, and today I have a very special guest. For the first time, I'm pleased to be joined by Nima R. Alkhorshid, an assistant professor in soil mechanics, civil engineering, and, of course, as all of you will know, the host of the wonderful podcast DialogueWorks, on which Nima has been working for the last four years, I believe, exploring international relations. He's been talking with many, many people and doing wonderful work—work that has personally inspired me as well. He's also been especially vocal about the horrible case that's going on with my countryman, Jacques Beau, something I'm very grateful for. So it's a great pleasure having you, Nima. Welcome to the channel.

#Nima

My pleasure, Pascal. It's great to be on with you. Finally, we get to talk—and thank you so much for your kind introduction.

#Pascal

I'm very glad we get to talk. We'll discuss Iran mainly in the latter part, but I think we should start a little bit with your channel, because, I mean, on your channel you're exploring so many topics and have so many wonderful guests. But actually, we just chatted a tiny bit before we started, and I realized I was never aware of why you started this. And, you know, as a civil engineer, how did it happen that you ended up in geopolitics on YouTube?

#Nima

When I decided to start this podcast and this channel, the main goal was to understand what was going on in Ukraine. At that time, I knew very little about Russia. I didn't know who Vladimir Putin was, what Russia was about, or what the motives in Ukraine were. Why was Russia invading Ukraine? Those were the main questions in my mind. Another reason was that, all of a sudden, I heard the president of Russia saying they wanted to "denazify." I thought, what is that? Nazis in Ukraine? Is Nazism still alive there? Who are these people? I always thought the Nazis were mostly

from Germany—maybe Poland at most—so how could they be in Ukraine? I was totally ignorant about it. I really had no idea what was going on in Ukraine.

That was my main motive for starting the podcast. I wanted to talk with people who knew what was going on in that region—militarily, economically, politically—to understand the whole situation in Ukraine. Then, little by little, I got familiar with foreign policies, with what was going on in the foreign policy of Europe, Russia, and the United States. What was the main objective of the United States in Ukraine? And then everything started to grow, little by little. I didn't want it to go that far, but it happened all of a sudden. Nothing was planned on my side—it just happened. I was learning, trying to understand. It was a huge learning process for me because I had no idea how the foreign policy of a country is defined and implemented.

#Pascal

So you basically fell down the rabbit hole and kept digging deeper. By now, what do you think you've understood after almost four years of this? And you know, it's quite a coincidence, because I've known your channel from a very early stage. I actually started mine around February 2022, when I began taking it seriously. I've seen what you've been doing and how you've approached it, and I've always admired that you had so many genuine questions—just honest questions for your guests. Now it makes total sense. So, where are you now with your own insights into how world politics works after these four years?

#Nima

I'm somewhere around what John Mearsheimer describes as "might makes right." I think he's totally right when it comes to the foreign policy of the United States. The U.S. foreign policy was the main driver of policies all around the world because they were the sole superpower. And all countries—whether from West Asia, Russia, or elsewhere—were influenced by it. The foreign policy of the United States is based on "might makes right," and it doesn't really matter how powerful other countries are.

You have to keep them regional. Even if they don't seek it, I think one of the main concepts of U.S. foreign policy is what was documented in the Wolfowitz Doctrine. I first got familiar with this doctrine when I was talking with Paul Craig Roberts. He explained what's happening with U.S. foreign policy and why they're doing this in West Asia—what's happening in Ukraine, what's happening in Taiwan. These are all pieces coming together in my mind as I try to understand what's going on, a combination of what John Mearsheimer is trying to, you know, explain to the whole world—how it all works.

It doesn't mean he agrees with whatever the United States is thinking. He's just describing the mindset of those people—neocons, neoliberals, the blob, the deep state, whatever you want to call them. The mindset is a simple calculation: might makes right. I think that's still true, especially now,

in 2026, with the war in Ukraine going on for four years, and with a war between the United States and Iran about to happen. You could argue it's still the same case. It's depressing, isn't it?

#Pascal

Because we'd love the world to be a better place, and we'd love to believe that international law matters, that norms matter, and that individual countries matter. You know, the United Nations General Assembly—one country, one vote. Okay, we're all aware that the Security Council has different rules, but in principle, we'd like it to be like that. But the world isn't. So how does it look from Brazil now, where you are? I mean, how are people there perceiving this spiral of doom that, to me, the U.S. and Europe are in right now, because they just keep getting more and more violent?

#Nima

You know, it's so interesting that you mentioned the UN—the United Nations. There were times, I'd say the golden times of the United Nations, when they were capable of doing something, of preventing something. That has somehow disappeared from the scene. It's not because of the UN as an organization; it's because of the United States. After World War II, the U.S. was the sole superpower, and every country, before voting in the Assembly—even those in the Security Council—was somehow looking to the United States: what's the decision on the part of the U.S.? Then they decided how they would vote.

But the influence of the United States has somehow diminished over the years because of the rise of BRICS and the rise of China. Russia isn't in the same place either. You remember, in 2000, when Putin came to power, Russia was a total mess. And, you know, it took Russia about ten years—from 2000 to 2010—to put an end to the conflict with Chechnya, with Dagestan, with those groups that were somehow, you know, working together with the CIA to destabilize Russia. But all those destabilizations have disappeared from the scene. And now you see China growing, BRICS growing, as a powerful alternative to what the United States has to offer.

That has changed the reality of the U.N. The U.N. today is not influenced by the United States; it's influenced by all these powers. That's why, when it comes to Palestine and Israel, you see the United States is simply alone. Nobody's voting the way the United States is supporting Israel. Nobody agrees. Most countries don't agree with the United States and its policies in West Asia. I said that to come to Brazil. Brazil is a huge country—look at the map, you see how huge Brazil is. Brazil is the most important country in Latin America, considering the economy. But Brazil didn't have that much leverage when it comes to foreign policy.

They weren't that focused on foreign policy. But Brazil is in the process of changing, and the change is happening drastically because of its connections with China, with Russia, with BRICS. They see that the United States is not—well, I don't know, you may remember when Donald Trump came to power—he simply went against the current president of Brazil, supporting Bolsonaro, the previous

president, and saying, "You have to do this and that," whatever he thought. He was trying to force U. S. policies on Brazil—either you do it, or you get 50% tariffs on Brazil. The Brazilians said, "Go with the 50% tariff."

#Pascal

Yeah, and by now, you know, we know that Brazil overall had it easy. I mean, Venezuela just got regime-changed—hundreds of people dead, the president kidnapped. I mean, it's kind of stunning, isn't it? The kind of things the United States can get away with these days and even receive applause from Europe, which for me as a European is even more... I don't know how to call it. It's not so much surprising, but it just makes my stomach turn. It's like all the things—all the speeches of these people, all the calling out for a rules-based order and calling themselves moral superpowers—and then they just go along with the most horrible infringements of international law. And they still pretend that everything's all right. Is Latin America, South America, is Brazil perceiving that, or is it kind of, you know, that it has always been like this?

#Nima

You know what has happened in Venezuela? I think the whole of Latin America is under such pressure from the United States. It's not just Venezuela—you see it with Cuba, and something may happen there too. It could even spread to Colombia. You mentioned Europe—what has happened in Europe? What has happened in Ukraine? Who's going to pick up the pieces of Ukraine? It's going to be the Europeans. And who's going to take the pieces of Venezuela and Cuba if something happens in Cuba as well? You see all these people coming to Brazil. The United States, through its foreign policy, has put tremendous pressure on Europe for such a long time. It's not just about Ukraine. You look at Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and Ukraine—they've been devastated.

One of the main problems Europe is facing today is these, you know, uncontrolled borders, because when undocumented people come to a country, they can bring huge challenges. Iran has the same issue with Afghanistan. It's not just Europe being affected by immigration. When I went to Iran—I was there for 40 days, in December 2025—I learned that more than 12 million Afghans are in Iran, mostly undocumented. A country of about 91 million taking in 12 million immigrants in such a short time—that's a lot.

It was after the United States left Afghanistan. It's not just during, you know—it was huge. And these are the consequences, the outcomes of U.S. foreign policy, as nobody's taking responsibility for that. Nobody is willing to push hard against the United States, even though these policies are affecting us. Here in Brazil, it's the same. There isn't really an honest, you know, a working relationship between Brazil and the United States, because the U.S., under the Trump administration, wasn't capable of communicating with the Brazilian president. And they saw no outcome—no viable outcome—if they tried to talk with the United States under the Trump administration. That's the problem.

#Pascal

So, like, the heavy hand of the U.S.—and along with that, you know, the complacent European states that go along with it, cheer it on, participate in these “coalitions of the willing.” Now they’re trying to do this again with Ukraine, pushing Ukrainians into the bayonets of the Russians, making this bloodletting all but inevitable, and then blaming it on Russia. And they call people like us “Russian propagandists” for simply pointing out that their actions have consequences too. How is it... You know, your channel is called *Dialogue Works*, and I love that title because that’s how I want the world to be. I want dialogue to work things out. But we see that the warmongers refuse to talk—they refuse to actually have dialogue. Did you ever try to invite some of them? Because I did, and they always say no.

#Nima

I tried to talk with them, and they said no—they’re not going to, you know, because, Pascal, they have everything. They have the mainstream media. They don’t need to come to alternative media, to channels like yours or whatever. You’re doing an amazing job inviting people who are mostly unknown in the mainstream media—the people who actually know what they’re talking about. But the mainstream media doesn’t want to know these people, doesn’t talk with these people. That’s the main problem.

#Pascal

It's kind of surprising, isn't it? And then we find people like— and I know you've had them on your channel several times—like Ted Postol, Jacques Baud, Jeffrey Sachs, Mearsheimer, and so on. You know, highly competent people in their fields, highly accomplished, and nobody wants to listen to them. In the mainstream, it just makes your head explode. When I tell my parents about who I got to talk to, they're like, “Oh, these are really important people, aren't they?” Yes, they are. And for some reason, mainstream discourse just expels them. So what do you think we have to do to make dialogue not only work again, but happen again?

#Nima

I think the only way it could work is by breaking down this mindset of the United States being the sole superpower. You know, the way many people understand it—because our audience on Dialogue Works, I think they’re mostly informed about what’s going on with the big picture of the world, of our planet. We are living, I would say, Pascal, in a time when the war in Ukraine has totally changed everything—each and every calculation. And maybe later, in 20 years, or even in 100 years, some people will describe it as a watershed moment when the whole world changed. And it’s so important, Pascal, because it’s not just about Russia and Ukraine. It’s about how the United States can even push that far against a superpower—a nuclear superpower—right at Russia’s doorstep. You know,

when they can do that to Russia, what do you think a country like Venezuela, or Brazil, or Iran should feel?

#Pascal

I mean, by now they've shown what they'll do, right? They come in with Apache helicopters, kill people, and take whatever they want—because they can, because it works. And then, to add insult to injury, the kidnapped abductees are put on show trials in New York, among other things, for the illegal possession of firearms under U.S. domestic law. It's just the height of ridiculousness. But it drives the point home: we do whatever we want, and U.S. law applies to everyone if we say so. Period. So, you don't want to comply?

Well, Apache coming—it's a scary moment. It's a very scary moment because, you know, we always thought that in the Cold War, the image was that the bad guys were always in the East, right? James Bond always fights Russia. And then you figure out, oh, James Bond itself is part of the whole brainwashing propaganda game. Okay, fine. What do you think? In my view, though, the reputation of the U.S. and Europe is irreparably damaged in the Global South. Do you think they'll ever manage to win back the hearts and minds of the people?

#Nima

I don't believe it. I don't believe that the United States, with this sort of behavior—trying to push everything, you know, trying to force countries into some kind of arrangement they have in mind—that's not going to work. This is not how the world works today. The shift, Pascal, I cannot emphasize enough how important BRICS is. I think BRICS is the future. BRICS is the next UN. BRICS can bring together all these institutions. You know, the United States has a choice. Do they really want to make the UN work? They can see what's happening in BRICS. What's happening in BRICS is that you see all these countries with their differences, but when they try to decide on something, they put those differences aside and focus on the common ground to work with.

This is not going to work with the United States in its current shape and form, because this shape reflects the mindset of people who still belong to the Cold War era. They don't understand the new reality of the world. They don't understand that when, you know, Donald Trump started—it's not that far away—it was in January 2016, 2017, when Trump came to power and tried to force China by putting tariffs on them. And just look at the outcome. He basically started the conflict, started this economic war, and then he capitulated. Did you see that? Did you see that happening in the mainstream media?

#Pascal

No, it's not directly for the world to see what really happened. No, these moments are then just conveniently forgotten. Just like the Ukraine war will be conveniently forgotten once, you know,

Russia is in Odessa forever—or maybe even Kiev, although I kind of don't think so. But, you know, once they stop and there's this demilitarized zone and Ukraine is unable to continue the fight, then they're just going to forget about it. It's like, "Oh, really? Was there something?" Just like, "Oh, tariffs on China—was there something?" I mean, it's the selective memory-holing that goes on, that then forms and shapes the perception of the situation for the masses in Europe and North America.

But I have this feeling it won't work much longer, because the next thing the United States seems to be preparing right now—and who knows, I mean, it's Friday evening here in Japan—it's possible that the attack on Iran could come tonight. Especially since my friends in the finance world keep saying the optimal time for something like this would be a Friday evening after markets close in New York, to have two days before the oil markets go completely berserk. So the bets are on a Friday night sneak attack, probably around three or four a.m. in Iran.

If they do that—if that actually happens—and this time Iran has made it crystal clear, it's not going to be a 12-day war. It's going to be a long war, because this time they're really going to fire back, not just do things for show or communication. If that happens, unless the United States can end it and win within six or seven days—a week, whatever "winning" means—it's going to drive another nail into the coffin of the superpower. But at the same time, it might kill many, many innocent people in Iran, of course. How are you assessing that situation? I mean, you have personal ties to Iran as well, right? How do you perceive this entire horror show at the moment?

#Nima

I would say what's going on between Iran and the United States at this particular moment is similar to what happened on December 21st between Russia and the whole West—NATO and the United States. The Russian president sent two letters, one to the United States and one to NATO headquarters, saying, "This is going to be the outcome. You're going to fight—we're ready to fight. Or you're going to come to some sort of agreement, some kind of geopolitical or security architecture for Europe—we're ready for that." Iran is in that moment. Iran is in that moment. The policymakers in Iran, the foreign policy establishment, believe they can negotiate.

It doesn't matter if the United States is trying to attack Iran—their duty is to talk, to negotiate. And they're doing their best. On the other hand, you see the military and intelligence forces, all of them, are so prepared to go into this fight. For many people who don't understand what Iran is today, I'd say you need to understand the war that Russia is fighting in Ukraine—Iran fought that in 1980. The United States started a proxy war against Iran, using the Iraqi government and the Iraqi military. It wasn't just the United States. Back then, it was right after the revolution in Iran, and everything was so fragile. There wasn't really a government as we know it today.

There was no system, and everything was still taking shape in Iran. Then Iran was attacked by Iraq. Who was supporting Iran in that war? The Europeans—mostly I'm talking about Germany, the United Kingdom—and all these Arab states, except Syria and Libya, you know. Even the Soviet Union

was helping Iraq in that war against Iran. Iran survived that war. Iran was alone in those days. The situation today is not that bad; it's not the same as before. The United States is not the same superpower it once was. It doesn't matter how much the United States tries to build up its military presence in the Middle East.

When I was in Iran, I told you that for 40 days I was there trying to talk with people on the streets. I talked with many officials. What's happening is that there's a connection between public opinion and the leadership when it comes to a foreign attack on Iran. They say the only solution would be to go and fight them. And they've done it before. We know those people who were fighting in their twenties, in their teens—they were fighting in Iraq. Those same people are the commanders in Iran right now. These aren't people with no experience in war; they know what war is and how ugly it can get. If war happens, Pascal, it's going to be an existential war for Iran.

Iran has no choice. It cannot afford to lose a war against the United States and Israel. That's why I think Iran would do everything possible. Many people are saying that more than 50% of the U.S. military power is in the Middle East—and 50% is huge. Believe me, that's a massive buildup. But when you talk with people, with officials, they're not afraid of that. This was really amazing to me, because they believe they can survive, they can fight back. For the United States, this would be a war of choice, not an existential one. And I have no doubt—believe me, I have no doubt—that the United States will lose. They're not going to be able to win.

When I'm talking about losing, I'm not talking about, you know—because when it comes to the sustainability of the war, it's not going to be a quick one. It's not a war they can just hit Iran in one week or ten days and then get away with the whole concept of attack. Iran is going to hit back, and they're going to hit back hard. And if the whole concept of war is based on what Israel is asking for, Israel is going to be devastated. Many people don't understand that. I'm not happy with any sort of war. I don't want to see any country devastated by war, because we've seen what has happened in Gaza. Look at what's happening in Gaza—before and after October. Before October 7th, look at what Gaza was, and look at what Gaza is today. War is not bringing any kind of peace.

#Pascal

No, it's making everything worse, of course. But the thing is, some people believe it's a solution, right? You can use the big hammer. I mean, literally—in the 12-day war, the attack on the nuclear facility—they called it "Midnight Hammer." Right. Even the naming conventions of their operations make me wonder if these aren't like 12-year-olds thinking they're playing a stupid video game. But some people believe they can take a hammer and just make the problem go away. But this one—this one won't. I mean, you put it very well when you pointed out how many things the Islamic Republic of Iran has already survived.

And you know how the only time a genuinely indigenous revolution swept away a regime—that was the regime of the Shah. It was an installed, fake, artificial regime that replaced the democratically

elected Mr. Mossadegh, right? Who, if I understand correctly, still enjoys very high regard among large parts of the Iranian population. I've never been to Iran, but that's what I hear from my friends and colleagues. And the Islamic Revolution then kind of brought to power people with whom, I mean, even the left and the progressive part of Iran don't agree.

But trying to attack a country and then believing you can just get rid of that government—especially in a country as big as Iran, with 90 million people and all the landmines it has—seems incredibly foolish. The main argument, though, is that, yes, regime change will come because the local population is, you know, 70–80% under the thumb of the 10–15% of the mullahs, as they call them. And I think that couldn't be a bigger misunderstanding. Can you maybe tell us a little bit, from your analysis and personal knowledge, how Iran works and how it deals with its own internal political disagreements?

#Nima

It's not just unique to Iran—it happened in Russia as well. They said it's all Putin and Russia, you know? They were demonizing Putin and "Putinizing" Russia in order to bring everything down there. But let's focus on Iran. Your main question is Iran. Iran today is nothing like what the West tries to picture for us. They oversimplify everything to cover their ignorance of what's really happening in Iran. They call it "the mullahs' regime." It's not about mullahs at all. It's a system powered by the people—by many people. You have to see the whole system; it's not even directly related to the mullahs.

They don't have any sort of—well, you know, this is a country that's been defined for more than, you know, since the aftermath of the revolution. Back then, those religious institutions were trying to manage everything because the revolution was so young. But as time went by, you see the system itself capturing power in Iran. The system is running the country. It's not at all like the rhetoric that oversimplifies everything. Iran is huge—really huge. I'd say, look at how the government works. Look at the parliament in Iran. Look at the various tools the country uses. They say the supreme leader of Iran is not elected by the people.

But those people who choose the supreme leader of Iran—and who can also remove him—were themselves elected to their positions. This is, you know, just ridiculous to me, for someone who actually understands Iran. Iran is nothing like the way the mainstream media tries to portray it. And today, when they talk about bringing down the government or killing the supreme leader—you see it every day, people saying, "We're going to kill, we're going to assassinate the supreme leader of Iran and his son"—they think that's going to bring huge change, that it's going to change everything.

#Pascal

No, it's simple. That's just not true.

#Nima

That's not going to bring any kind of change in favor of your argument.

#Pascal

They always think that the leader, or the most recognizable head of a country, is the country itself—like the United States would collapse tomorrow if somebody shot Donald Trump. I mean, Trump would be dead, but the United States would live, and it would live to be furious and outraged. But for some reason, they believe that if you do that to another country, then it's all going to be gone. Of course, some people understand this, and we know in the United States—especially the military—understands that's not the case. They're actually warning the White House against doing something as foolish as that, because once the bombs start dropping, it's going to be very difficult to make them stop again.

I mean, getting them to stop after the 12-day war was already an achievement—mainly on Iran's side, since they decided not to retaliate any further in a drastic way after Midnight Hammer, right? But it takes a lot of courage to end fighting. If you had to describe Iran to Westerners, what would you say is the most important thing to understand about how the system works?

#Nima

I'd say the system in Iran is not—well, let's put it this way: do you think the system in Switzerland is similar to what's happening in France?

#Pascal

No.

#Nima

They have nothing to do with each other. Iran is a unique system, Pascal—a unique system. When you have the Supreme Leader of Iran, you have various points. You have the government in Iran, and people say that the Supreme Leader is running the show, that the government has no authority, no power to implement its own policies. That's false—hugely false information. To some extent, you can say the Supreme Leader of Iran controls everything, but he's also a kind of balance between the left and right in Iran. We have two kinds of forces, two political parties—though we can't really call them parties in the way the United States works.

Because it's somehow different to understand that. You see the same people coming out of a revolution, with the same main mindset, but they have different ideas about how to bring their policies to the domestic market, to the foreign audience—how they can connect with the people in

Iran and build better relationships with other countries. But the Supreme Leader is a kind of balance between the left and right. We call them reformists and conservatives in Iran, and they always try to remain, you know, to stay in the middle, at the center—not tilted to the left or right—and help the country.

The main goal was that. But most policies today, internally and externally—especially when it comes to the Iranian nuclear program—are a matter of national security for Iran. That's why you see the Supreme Leader as totally dominant. His view and his understanding are central to the whole calculation. But most of the policies—99% of them, internally and externally—are decided by the government in Iran. That means the Supreme Leader doesn't participate in or influence those policies very much. And this is hugely misunderstood in the West.

#Pascal

One of the things brought up is that, of course, inside Iran you have a good number of people who oppose the central government, who oppose the Supreme Leader, and they flee the country. They then live abroad. I know several of them, and they're unhappy with the theocratic rule. On the other hand, in the United States, you have at least 50% who are extremely unhappy with the current regime. So, like, finding opposition in a country is no—finding opposition to the current position is really nothing extraordinary. It's just... why do you think it is that in the West, and in Europe too, there are so many people who believe that violence would be warranted in order to overthrow this government? What do you think is the prime motivation?

#Nima

Pascal, the agenda for the Middle East is not about having a big, important, powerful country there. You know, when it comes to the war in Iraq, as I've mentioned, the whole concept—well, Iran was at its most fragile when the war happened in the 1980s. It took eight years for Iran to get out of the war that the Iraqis started. And the concept—look at what's happening in the Middle East. Look at these Arab states in the Persian Gulf. Do you think that what has happened—the Israeli attack on Doha—well, you know, Qatar is one of the most important allies of the United States in the Middle East.

And yet you see fifteen Israeli fighter jets flying over Saudi Arabia, going to Qatar, hitting targets in civilian areas of Qatar, and then returning. And nobody's hitting back. Nobody's taking care of what has happened. Nobody's capable of defending Qatar or even realizing it's happening. They want Iran to be like this. They want Iran to be divided. Look at what has happened. I think the most important example right now is what has happened in Syria.

#Pascal

Right.

#Nima

They all said that Assad was the most problematic government in the region. And they brought down Assad, overthrew Assad—his so-called regime. Assad is gone. Is the problem solved in Syria? Syria is divided into five regions, if I'm not mistaken, today. Syria is dead. Syria was devastated, destroyed. It's not going to be unified again the way it was during the Assad government. It's all gone. The main agenda now turns to Iran, Pascal. They want to divide Iran into pieces. They said, "Let's break down Russia into federations." They want to break down Iran into provinces.

You know, the Kurdistan province, the Arab province, the Turk province—these are part of the agenda of the United States in the region. They don't want the only real, influential country in West Asia that's capable of fighting back, which is Iran today. Turkey is part of NATO; Iran is not part of NATO. Iran is not part of anything. You know, one of the main things I mentioned before is that the war in Ukraine has changed everything. Because Iran—if you remember the JCPOA, the nuclear program, the nuclear agreement with the United States and five European countries—they all signed that agreement, the JCPOA. And Donald Trump withdrew from it.

And the agreement, Pascal, was such that during those days, Russia and China were trying to stay in the middle—not really helping Iran or the United States, but trying to do whatever worked best for them. Today, Russia and China are not in the same position. Europe is not in the same position. Europe has lost its importance when it comes to Iran's foreign policy. You know, the foreign minister of Iran said something amazing recently: that trade between Iran and Afghanistan is now greater than Iran's trade with all of Europe combined.

#Pascal

I mean, it's not difficult if you're sanctioned up to the neck, right? And Iran is not just under the same sanctions as Russia. It's under these UN sanctions that were imposed at a time when China and Russia were largely going along. Even if they didn't vote for them, they okayed them by abstaining from voting against them in the Security Council. But those days are gone as well. I mean, the sanctions are still there because, unfortunately, the UN resolution and the Security Council resolution on them are still in place.

But neither China nor Russia would ever do something like this again. On the contrary, they're now trying to help Iran withstand the coming onslaught. But let me ask you, since you're a civil engineer and you used a very good metaphor earlier—the idea of a security architecture—how do you think a useful architecture should look on the Eurasian continent? And if you were the engineer tasked with building it, where would you start?

#Nima

I think I would start with the South Caucasus. The South Caucasus is the heart of Eurasia. If you can secure the South Caucasus, you can secure the concept of Eurasia—and the whole concept of the East. And what do we have in that region? We have Armenia, Azerbaijan, going up to Georgia. And look at what has happened recently: the British government is trying to go there, trying to get closer to the governments in that region. Look at what has happened with the strategic agreement—the vice president of the United States went to Azerbaijan to sign a new strategic agreement. These are the future wars that Lindsey Graham is talking about, that Israel is planning—the future wars. The future war is going to be not only against Iran, but the whole South Caucasus, because you have to destabilize the whole region in order to achieve something.

They tried it first with Georgia. Yeah. Then Ukraine—Ukraine. Right now they're coming to the—well, the problem, by the way, with this concept of destabilizing the region is that these governments aren't really capable of doing that. It doesn't matter how powerful the United States is or how much support they can bring to these governments. Look at what happened in Ukraine: 700,000 soldiers before February 2022 were prepared to fight against Russia. All those soldiers are gone. Ukraine was devastated as a result. In my opinion, Ukraine can't survive as a viable country if they let Russia take Odessa and Mykolaiv and move up to Kharkiv. They would cease to exist as an independent country. It would just be a small state somewhere. You know, the same thing could happen to Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan—you know, during the 12-day war between Iran and Israel, Azerbaijan was used to attack Iran. Recently, we had the head of Iran's Security Council, Ali Larijani, reaching out to countries across West Asia and the Persian Gulf Arab states, even talking with the government in Azerbaijan, saying that if you participate in a war against Iran, you're going to be devastated. It's not just in Iran's interest alone. Russia understands how important the situation in the South Caucasus is. China knows it too, because these are huge economic projects, Pascal—the North–South Corridor, the Belt and Road Initiative. These are major economic efforts, and the United States, under the Trump administration, tried to manipulate the South Caucasus as much as they could.

I think my opinion is that Russia today is not the Russia it was before the war in Ukraine. China today is not the China it was before the war in Ukraine, and before the tariff war against China. These countries have been forced to understand their strength—their might—to experience the power they already had. They never thought they'd use that might against the United States. This is what they're learning from their own experiences. Russia has learned that from its own experience. A defensive Russian army in 2022, which many people in the West argued would be defeated or trapped in Ukraine, has now taken about 22% of Ukraine, with 85% of its GDP lost.

#Pascal

You know, when we look at this, it's quite interesting that you're mentioning the South Caucasus as the main flashpoint, or the main point where something could actually change. Because to me, this

region—just like Ukraine—is a textbook example of how neutrality can be used as a solution to create buffers, a kind of no man's land, for the benefit of the entire regional architecture. The idea is to keep them that way, to secure everyone on both sides, and themselves as well. But that's why, you know, the failure of neutrality to emerge as the solution for Ukraine—which it was, it really was—and then being undermined, done away with, and prevented from coming back as a solution, that to me is the main crime.

And the biggest hope I have with the South Caucasus is that Georgia is showing it's possible—maybe not so much in words, but at least in deeds—to take back such a position and de-escalate the situation. If Armenia and Azerbaijan went a similar route, and if Iran then had an equidistant relationship with both, that would do so much to create stability. But unfortunately, the powers interested in destabilization and chaos are working overtime to prevent that. So the question for me really is how to strengthen those independent, neutralist forces on the ground, because that would create stability. Is there anything in this regard that you'd say—yes or no—that we need to keep in mind when we think about building architectures?

#Nima

You know, in terms of building architectures, I think the architecture is already being built by Russia, China, and Iran. It's not something abstract—they have it in their minds, they know the reality of the region. And in the case of the war against Iran, Pascal, just look at the situation not as an isolated conflict in Ukraine or an isolated conflict against Iran. Look at the big picture. Who's the main competitor, the most important competitor of the United States today in the world? It's a country called China. So what is China? China is a huge, gigantic engine that can produce everything—from a single piece of equipment to massive military hardware, everything.

They produce everything, Pascal—everything. So how can you bring down a country like China? The only solution, in my opinion, that's viable for those people—the neocons and neoliberals in the United States—is to cut off China's energy supplies. Who's supplying China with energy? Russia and Iran. That's why what's happening in Ukraine was part of an agenda. They thought that, together with Europe, they could trap Russia in Ukraine so that Russia wouldn't be able to stand up again. The worst-case scenario for Russia—the best-case scenario for them—was breaking Russia down into federations. The same thing is happening right now.

They're trying to attack Iran—the same concept. Venezuela—what was happening in Venezuela? What was the importance of Venezuela? Maduro said, "I'm ready for whatever deal you want to bring to the table." They said, "No, no. You have to do whatever we want you to do." You know, the strategy of the United States today is to control the energy market—it's going to control it—because this is the only way they can, you know, hit China. The military keeps talking about going to fight China in Taiwan. I think that's totally stupid. Nobody would do that. You don't go that far to fight against China. And Taiwan is a little island—just imagine, how can you fight China?

And that's why I think the agenda on the part of the United States is to bring Russia and China, and Iran and China, into a certain situation. You know, after one year of the Trump administration, they did nothing to end the conflict in Ukraine. And the war against Iran is happening as we speak. It's all about China, Pascal. We can say that West Asia is a complex issue. China, Ukraine, and Russia—Europe and Russia—they all have their conflicts. I'm not ignoring those facts. I understand the complexity of the situation in Ukraine and in West Asia. But what I'm trying to say is that, in the big picture, the main target is China. And China today understands that completely.

#Pascal

And the irony of the whole thing is that these last four, five, six years have really brought China and Russia together. Now they're including Iran in the mix, and all of BRICS as well. The irony is that this is basically where the hope for a more balanced and multipolar world actually lies—in what's being created right now as a counterreaction, which people like Mearsheimer predicted ages ago. He said, "If you do this, you'll create the very thing you're trying to avoid—a grand alliance between the others." And that alliance will look nothing like NATO. It's going to be, and already is, a completely different animal.

But here we go. The way world politics seems to work—action and reaction of powers and forces—and, um, apparently very, very violent people in the West. I must emphasize that: in the West. China, Iran—I mean, they haven't attacked another country for many, many years. The last war China fought was in '79 with Vietnam, a short one. Iran's last war was when it was attacked in the early '80s by Iraq. And before that, you know, we often forget that Iran was invaded in 1942 by the Allies—by Britain and the Soviet Union.

Those were the ones who invaded it in order to cut off the oil from Germany. But this takes us very far. And Nima, I'd like to thank you for giving us your interpretation of where things are going, and for letting us be part, a bit, of your own learning journey. I usually ask my guests to tell us where to find them, but in your case, I really don't have to ask. I just tell everybody to please go to DialogueWorks, subscribe to your channel, and follow you there. But is there any other place where you also write sometimes? Any place where people should follow you?

#Nima

I write on X as well, and they can find me there—yeah, DialogueWorks, yeah.

#Pascal

Right. DialogueWorks on X, DialogueWorks on YouTube. Yeah, it's going to be Substack—we have a Substack. Oh, you're writing on Substack too?

#Nima

Yeah, we put the videos on Substack. We mention the concept of the video—the whole discussion—and we put that on Substack as well.

#Pascal

Even better—everybody, also go to Substack and check out Nima's work there. Anything you'd like to add at this point?

#Nima

Thank you so much, Pascal.

#Pascal

We covered the globe. Nima, thank you so much for joining me today.