

Iran DEVASTATES Trump's Strike Plan, Israel Prepares Total War | KJ Noh

Iran just foiled Trump's strike plan as Israel prepares for total war amid hysteria that a surprise attack is coming to Tel Aviv. KJ Noh joins to break down the myth from the reality in this must-watch show. SIGN UP FOR CAMPAIGN TO CODEPINK CAMPAIGN: <https://www.codepink.org/novdc26> Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong> SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: <https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong> Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong> Telegram: <https://t.me/DannyHaiphong> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> #iranwar #trump #israel #yemen #usmilitary

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. Danny Haiphong here. As you can see, I am joined by geopolitical analyst and commentator KJ Noh to discuss the latest developments. KJ, I wanted to begin with this. So the United States, according to Iranian media, has asked Iran for permission to strike Pickaxe Mountain without retaliation, which Iran outright rejected. This is according to IRIB media. And Iran says that they are preparing for war within 24 hours, although Iran also has plans that could really hinder this. In the next several days, Iran does plan to conduct an operation there that will push the United States Navy further than the 500 kilometers away where they sit now, as the USS Theodore Roosevelt is going to join the H.W. Bush and the USS George Washington in the Arabian Sea in the coming days.

Now, Israel has been very busy sounding the alarm. It's on high alert right now for what they fear is a preemptive strike from Iran. And they've kept their military at the highest readiness on all fronts and have actually deployed bomb shelters throughout the entity, in Tel Aviv and Ashdod, as it braces for what they think is going to be a massive volley of missiles should this war restart. Now, Iran is continuing to enforce its control over the Strait of Hormuz, as it has hit ships near Saudi Arabia. This comes after hitting ports, ships ported at the UAE, as well as near Qatar in recent days.

And the UKMTO has said that ships are no longer reporting that they are getting hit, and that the number of ships hit in the last several weeks to a month have probably been double what we've heard. KJ, there's a lot going on in this part of the world, and it is having an impact on all parts of the world, including increasing pressure on South Korea to extend a deployment of its forces, usually stationed in the Gulf of Aden, to the Gulf of Oman near the Strait of Hormuz. What do you make of what's happening right now as we sit on the seams of the brink of major escalations?

#KJ Noh

Well, to be blindingly obvious, certainly there's massive escalation going on. As I've always said, and I will continue to say, Iran holds the upper hand, and the conditions that we have that are relatively stable—they're not, that is to say, they're not outright catastrophic war right now—is because of Iran's restraint. But it can certainly release some of that restraint, as we're seeing with the increased attacks on the tankers, not simply, you know, warning shots, but now, you know, literally hitting them. And so we've seen the largest number of tankers hit in the past few days since, you know, the start of the war.

The U.S. is without good moves. As I've said before, it cannot do boots on the ground. It simply doesn't have the manpower necessary, and it would take at least a year to stage that manpower and to do a meaningful incursion. If it's talking about special forces, what could they do? That remains to be seen. But even that is very, very challenging. If it wants to do some kind of symbolic strike on Pickaxe Mountain, I mean, you can do a big fireworks display. It's not going to make any difference. And at this point, Iran is signaling that it doesn't really have patience for these games anymore. If you recall, in the previous years, the U.S. would strike.

Iran would do a minimal response. U.S. got to claim that it was all-powerful, and that was the end of the story. That story ended in the Ramadan War itself, when Iran took off its gloves and showed that we can stand and we can hit back, we can fight back hard. And the person who comes out the worst from that is the United States. So the U.S. has retreated its ships. Its bases have been wiped out. Its strategic radars have been wiped out. It is no longer capable of doing the sorties that it is accustomed to doing when it usually engages in air-sea battle or air-land battle operations against its opponents. So the U.S. is in a difficult state.

Yes, it seems to be moving aircraft carriers into the region. But again, it's an unknown quantity. Aircraft carriers, if there were all three aircraft carriers, they would be bringing about 180, 200 airplanes to the fray. But even that is much, much less than the usual air power that the U.S. is used to exercising—that is, to have total air dominance over space. And it's an unknown quantity, but Iran has signaled that it is capable of hitting those aircraft carriers. So if the U.S. were thinking carefully about and understanding things from a strategic standpoint, it would be moving those aircraft carriers as far out of theater as possible.

As for the Israeli response and this language around preemptive strike, I don't think that Iran is in a mood for a preemptive strike. If a strike happens, it will be because Israel has attacked it. So all of this is simply more hysteria. We have an election coming up. Certainly it's in the interest of Likud and Netanyahu to restart active kinetic war, to use that to rally its voters. And I think this notion of preemptive strike is both a psychological operation in preparation for a false flag, as are the bomb

shelters, which largely serve as a visible and demonstrative psyop. So all of this is to say that, you know, things are not looking good. As we discussed before, South Korea has refused President Trump's demands to send troops to Iran.

And this is traditionally where the United States gets its cannon fodder. It gets its cannon fodder from proxies, but primarily South Korea has been a key provider of cannon fodder. During the Vietnam War, it sent 325,000 troops—the second-largest deployment. During the Iraq War, it sent the second-largest deployment. And this time, once again, it looked like the U.S. was going to make the demand and South Korea would acquiesce. The current progressive president, Lee Jae-myung, has responded with an overt no, but we also know that South Korea already has troops in the United Arab Emirates, special warfare forces in the United Arab Emirates.

And it also has the Chunghae Brigade, which is a 4,400-ton destroyer, along with planes and aircraft, probably several company-size detachments. And they have signaled that they could move its domain of operations from the Gulf of Aden towards the Persian Gulf, into the Gulf of Oman. So essentially it would be getting involved. Now, this is actually against the South Korean Constitution. You need legislative approval to expand the scope of military operations overseas. But they may be trying to, you know, look for a loophole, and this kind of slow mission creep may be their way of acquiescing to the U.S. demand. So we'll see what happens.

#Danny

Yeah, well, this was a report in The Cradle about it, citing Kyunghyang Shinmun, a newspaper, talking about exactly what you just said: the Cheonghae anti-piracy unit, which has been deployed in the Gulf of Aden since 2009, could expand and include the Gulf of Oman if this all goes through. But also, KJ, it's interesting to watch the United States right now, as Iran reportedly rejected a permit. Imagine this: the United States asking permission from Iran to strike Pike Ice Mountain. This is very reminiscent of the 12-day war at the very end, where there were suspicions and some reports, although I don't think Iran ever confirmed this, that the Trump administration had asked Iran also to stand down during Operation Midnight Hammer.

But now we have Pakistani waters serving the U.S. Navy, which has led some to question. Of course, Pakistan has tried to play a neutral role in the mediation, but nevertheless, the United States Navy is stationed there right now, some believe, to be part of a coming attack. And that, you know, is, I think, indicative of something. KJ, what do you think it's indicative of? Again, this is having global ramifications, and I think what people thought they knew about how things were going is getting challenged right now as the United States tries to figure out what the hell to do here.

#KJ Noh

Well, again, to be obvious, it's a signal of desperation. The U.S. going to Pakistan and trying to get their support. Pakistan will probably give partial support, but it's always been kind of a— it has

always been an unreliable ally. The U.S. has worked hard to pull Pakistan into its orbit because it's an important part of the Global South. It is a strong, or was a strong, ally with China. But remember, Imran Khan was deposed. He's still rotting in prison. And the current administration is clearly balancing and, on occasion, supporting the United States. But at the end of the day, I don't think it will make much of a difference. Certainly didn't make much of a difference in previous wars in West Asia. And I think, more than anything else, this is really a sign of desperation. The U.S. asking all around, going around, you know, with its cup in hand, you know, my kingdom for a horse. They're looking for support anywhere they can get it.

#Danny

Yeah, and to continue on with desperation, the theme of desperation, it says right now the Israeli Air Force, according to Ynet, Israeli media, is on standby for immediate response to a potential Iranian attack. But again, the IDF is advising Netanyahu not to strike for now as the defense industry, this is interesting, continues to produce more interceptors, munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles for the next conflict. This doesn't really make any sense. Neither did those images of the bomb shelters. KJ, what could a bomb shelter do? I mean, I guess if you're underground, you'll be okay. But I imagine a missile could destroy those things. How do you get out of it is the question. What's your thoughts on this? It did seem like a calculated psyop, in my opinion, just looking at those things.

#KJ Noh

Well, I think they're essentially like large porta-potties, you know. I mean, I don't think they're going to make any difference. And they're probably about as effective as a porta-potty. I've seen reinforced porta-potties that look stronger than those quote-unquote bomb shelters. I mean, the key thing about sheltering is that it has to be in the ground or underground. You don't put a bomb shelter on the street. That is just a publicity stunt. I mean, I suppose, essentially, it's better than lying flat on the ground.

#Danny

I mean, they're called mobile bomb shelters too, which means you're not underground because you can be moved. You can move these from one place to another, which... it doesn't seem to make any sense.

#KJ Noh

It doesn't make any sense. But the part that does make sense, I mean, once again, let's emphasize that Iran is not in the business of aggressive preemptive attacks. It has not done that to date, although it would have every reason to do that. If it responds, it will be because it has been attacked. But again, this is the use of a false flag to trigger war, to shift the political atmosphere towards the Likud Party. I think that's what's going on right now. But the truth here in that little

report is that interceptors and the military-industrial backbone is severely weakened all across Europe, the U.S. imperial empire, and its vassals. And so the lack of interceptors, the lack of hardware, is probably a real issue that they are dealing with.

And that's why there may be some conflicting messages. Interceptors, we know, were already severely depleted during the Ramadan War. We certainly know that the U.S. does not have the industrial capacity to build these back rapidly. It's even harder, not only simply because the U.S. has gutted out its own industrial base, but also because many of these interceptors and precision missiles require rare earth elements, which China is most certainly withholding. So it's a difficult position for them, but they too want some kind of theatrical, demonstrative, performative war so that they can achieve short-term political gains. And I don't think Iran is going to oblige them on that, you know.

#Danny

No, and, you know, Iran's definition of a preemptive strike appears to be that if they get a sniff that an operation is underway, they're going to strike first. But that still is defensive in the sense that they are striking where that operation is going to originate from, like they did last month when the bases in Jordan were struck first. So that appears to be what Iran will do. It's not going to just launch missiles at Israel because the world wants it to.

#KJ Noh

And I would point out, Danny, that once war breaks out, hitting military bases is completely legitimate. We don't even have to classify that under preemption. The U.S. started a war. It had these bases, and once you've started a war and you are a party to the war, your bases can be hit in war. Yeah.

#Danny

Yeah. Yeah. And this war is still very active. I mean, the MOU has been torn up by Trump himself. So there is nothing on paper that says this can't happen now. But, KJ, I wanted to get your comments on this because I wanted to move a little bit into the economic consequences of all of what's been happening, not just in West Asia. But this is a report: so the UKMTTO released a report saying that they're struggling to accurately report the true number of attacks, with the majority of vessels attacked refusing to report. So that means, KJ, that over 50% likely are not reporting at all what's going on in the Strait of Hormuz area. And therefore, the numbers that we're getting, even though they are quite striking, over 30 in the last two weeks, are likely much smaller.

And we know that inflation is very high, and Donald Trump is taking some pretty extreme measures for the U.S. empire to mitigate this economic concern and economic problems. We saw the diesel deal with Russia, but now he's easing sanctions on Russia and also mulling easing pressure on so-

called Iranian shadow fleets amid this crisis. And this is part of that Lindsey Graham bill that has already been pushed through that saw like 500 percent tariffs on Russia and something ridiculous like that. So there's a lot of desperation here on the economic front. Your comments on this, the economic front of all of this, and why it seems like this economic D-Day, this attempt to strike Iran and the world at the heart of the problem, the Iranian economy seems to have just exploded into a global crisis.

#KJ Noh

Well, I mean, this was anticipated, right? I mean, once you hit the global artery, once you create a conflagration in the global artery of hydrocarbons, you're going to get these results. And once again, let's emphasize it's not simply diesel or natural gas or petrol. It's everything else that's related to the hydrocarbon industry: urea, ammonia, sulfur, naphtha, etc. All of these things create the essential structure of a modern capitalist society. Without them, we can't function. So the pain, and more pain, is still yet to come. But the simple fact that, for example, President Trump lifted the Lindsey Graham sanctions shows how extraordinarily desperate the U.S. is.

I mean, this will release anywhere between three to 11 days' worth of diesel, but they'll take three days or 11 days, whatever it is. They still need it. They need as much as possible. Of course, you know, this boils back to, you know, the simple fact that when you're in an electoral year, you're looking at the economy. Everybody knows that it's the economy, stupid. And so the U.S. is trying to do what it can. President Trump is trying to do what he can. But the desperation really signals extraordinary weakness in the U.S., the extraordinarily weak hand that it has right now. And the fact that they're also trying to manipulate the market, clearly that is one part of the equation. The fact that ships are refusing to report attacks, again, that shows that they are trying to cover their rear as well.

But certainly, yeah, there are more than 30 vessels that have been attacked. And it's like, you're trying to keep your insurance rates low, and you don't want to scare off customers. So they certainly have an incentive to not report the full picture. But the full picture we get, we get it downstream. When we look at diesel prices, we look at inflation, when we go to the supermarket, we see the cost of everything has skyrocketed. And all of this is reversible if the U.S. were simply to back down and back out. And it is not doing that because it is so deeply tied to its notion of hegemony and so deeply tied to its idea that it has to control the global economy, the hydrocarbon flows, and the financial structures that are undergirded by the petrodollar.

#Danny

Speaking of the petrodollar, while the United States and Israel are having a hard time figuring out when to strike Iran and what the consequences will be, Saudi Arabia is facing a major crisis. Yemen, Ansar Allah, hit the so-called presidential compound of Israel's puppet government, I believe, in Aden, and that has caused massive damage. And then the oil prices spiked yesterday. And now

we're getting reports that it did so likely because Saudi oil was being hit yesterday, in the last two days, quite hard. This is another problem for United States hegemony. This is the petrodollar. And, KJ, Saudi Arabia is now lashing out at Iran, China, and Russia. It has blamed Iran for breaking the normalization agreement brokered by China in 2023 because they're saying it's Ansar Allah getting supplied by Iran. And they're also pointing the finger at China too, saying that Ansar Allah has been able to build a lot of its capacity because of Chinese assistance. Your thoughts on this? It seems like a full-circle kind of moment.

#KJ Noh

It is a full circle, but Saudi Arabia has nobody to blame but itself. The fact that it is a vassal of the United States, and it took U.S. direction to attack the airport in Sana'a and then unleash the war all over again. I mean, it has nobody to blame but itself and its poor judgment and its quizzling obeisance to the United States. I mean, this was predictable. And it is, you know, you have the two arteries of the global hydrocarbon flow, the Bab el-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz. And when the Strait of Hormuz essentially was closed down, South Korea was shifting its hydrocarbon flows through the East-West Pipeline towards the Red Sea. And at the same time, this is the utter foolishness of it, it attacked Yemen, the Ansar Allah group returning from Iran after the funeral of the Supreme Leader.

And so by reigniting the war, they put themselves into this quandary, quagmire that they have no way of getting out of. And of course, if you're fighting a war with a bunch of mercenaries, you are not going to prevail. I mean, essentially, when push comes to shove, motivated national military fighting against a colonizing force, which is what Saudi Arabia is in Yemen, is going to prevail. And so not only has Yemen shown its military mettle, it's shown its military strategic acumen, and it has also shown its capacity to put tremendous pain on Saudi Arabia, not simply the attack on the presidential compound, as well as the beating back along the coastline, but also the fact that it has shut down the East-West Pipeline.

It's attacked it multiple times. And we also know that it is capable of shutting down the Red Sea completely. In particular, if the Bab el-Mandeb is shut down, Saudi Arabia will try and send oil through. Tankers can't go through the Suez Canal, but they're trying to get oil out through terminals into the Mediterranean, and then they'll do another four-week trip around the Horn, etc. Even that has been shown to be extremely vulnerable, and I think those targets will be knocked out and completely destroyed if Saudi Arabia continues to escalate. It will not if it doesn't come to the table and negotiate rapidly with Yemen. Saudi Arabia is in a very, very bad place. It is on the verge of collapse.

The House of Saud, which has been a U.S. quisling for decades, is no longer viable. And I think the sooner they realize this, the sooner they come to grips with the reality, I think the better it will be for the rest of the world. In the meantime, Yemen controls the Bab el-Mandeb. It controls the left artery. Iran controls the right artery. It's a very, very, you know, it's a zugzwang for the Saudis. And

they can lash out all they want. They can lash out against China, against Iran, against the United States even. It's not going to make any difference. Geopolitical, geoeconomic, geostrategic realities make it so that Saudi Arabia does not have any good options left at this point.

#Danny

Yeah, well, I find it very interesting that the longer that these wars go on now, both in West Asia, the war in Iran and the war against Ansar Allah, both of which are facing big problems, I find it very interesting that China, Russia, they're getting lumped in, they're getting pulled back into the narrative by the empire and its various, you know, attendant forces, like, for example, the UK. Look at—I mean, this unrepentant racism, putting this—they put up this picture to try to make Ansar Allah look like there's some kind of hysterical, you know, aggressive force with the zoomed-in picture. But essentially, Telegraph is reporting here that China is supporting the Iran-backed Houthis, Ansar Allah, as a way to pressure the United States, saying that the militant group is seeking a medium-range ballistic missile, the Khaybar Shekan missile that Iran has, which would be made with Chinese components, saying that a ship last year that was intercepted off the Red Sea had Chinese components in it that could build this missile. What do you make of this? Because what we see, I think, is the United States, in terms of its actual policy in the collective West, very much very disjointed now on Russia and China in terms of how it looks, apparently.

#Danny

Trump's administration meeting with Xi, easing economic sanctions on Russia, seemingly all because this is necessary for the moment. But at the same time, the combined West, the collective West, has not at all, as a whole, dialed back at all. Now they're actually trying to include China and Russia in some kind of Cold War fantasy in West Asia. So your thoughts on this, KJ? What do you make of these reports that China is aiding and abetting Ansar Allah? I think much of the world will think that's cool, but what do you make of the actual reality of it?

#KJ Noh

I mean, we don't know. We don't know the exact dimensions. Certainly, you know, China has been supporting Iran, certainly Iran's sovereignty, certainly with certain types of intelligence. The actual details further than that, we don't know. But as you point out, it's probably what most of the world would support, as well as, you know, the support of Ansar Allah. What we do know is that Ansar Allah's missile technology comes from North Korea. And so North Korea and Ansar Allah in Yemen, initially South Yemen but including the resistance now, they are strongly supported by North Korean technology and North Korean strategy. This is the entire geographic dispersion and tunnel warfare that both Iran and Yemen, Ansar Allah, have been using.

It does look disjointed because the U.S. is trying to see if it can work with its enemies because it's trying to deal with the immediate pressures of the war that it triggered in West Asia. And for them,

ultimately, these wars are interconnected. Essentially, they're interconnected in the sense that these are all decolonial wars. They're wars where countries are trying to regain control, national sovereignty. They're trying to liberate themselves from the global U.S. empire. And so, in that sense, they are connected. And from the standpoint of the U.S., of course, from the standpoint of the hegemon, they want to repress any, you know, counter-hegemonic movements. So certainly they want to blame. I wouldn't put much, you know, trust in The Telegraph.

They are a tabloid. They say anything that comes to mind. They are, you know, utter and shameless propagandists. The more dangerous propagandists are the ones that seem plausible, and people think, "Oh yeah, that sounds about right," and they go for that. So anything that you see in The Telegraph, you can, you know, toss it in the waste bin. It doesn't mean anything. But it is true that, you know, there is a core strength of the multipolar world, which is the crux, you know, this China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea, and they form the kind of hard, forceful backbone which can hit back if necessary. And certainly, they may be giving moral support, if not other support, to other liberation movements around the Global South. Yeah, well, great points, KJ. Now...

#Danny

You know, maybe you can talk more about the—I know you wrote a recent piece in CounterPunch on the U.S. controlling South Korea's military operational control, or OPCON. And maybe you can elaborate on this. It seems like, overall, the United States is really trying to rely on those forces in the world that it still has, I guess you could say, both formally with this case of South Korea, but also informally in other countries as well, like operational control, trying its hardest to rely on these forces in order to achieve objectives against Iran, and then, of course, in the bigger scene, Russia and China. But lots of problems are emerging. Are problems emerging in this case too, with South Korea, KJ? Maybe you can talk more about that and how it reflects the broader world situation that we find ourselves in.

#KJ Noh

Yeah, there have always been problems with this issue. And it's a kind of a mind-boggling thing if you really stop and think about it. But the United States controls South Korea's military, and that is an abrogation of sovereignty which is unheard of in modern history. That, quote-unquote, a sovereign state has its entire military—500,000 troops plus 3.1 million troops, 3.6 million troops—controlled by the United States. It's like one of those things where people think, "I can't believe it. Does this still exist in the current modern age?" The answer is yes. And the reason for it is, 76 years ago, the U.S. took control of South Korea's military during the Korean War, which most informed historians think was triggered by South Korea.

But anyway, it still controls South Korea's military to this day. And this is just mind-boggling because it's known that militaries will try and create a unified command. If there are multiple militaries fighting together, they will create a unified command, and they'll do that by transferring OPCON. But

that is done very, very rapidly. And then once war ends, it is released back to the sovereign country, because you don't want to hold on to another country's military forever. In Korea, it's lasted over, as I said, over 76 years. And South Korea has asked for its OPCON back repeatedly. This is the thing that tells you that South Korea is a U.S. vassal, because it's asked over and over and over again. It's been over three decades since it's asked for it back.

And the U.S. has always delayed, filibustered, waffled, and moved the goalposts. So most recently, the U.S. signaled that there's going to be more delay. And Xavier Brunson, who is the USFK commander, UNC commander, CFC commander, essentially the person who controls South Korean troops, has said security conditions have changed and we cannot return OPCON on a timeline. It has to be conditions-based. And those conditions have changed, which the South Korean government has taken to mean that means never. So anyway, Lee Jae-myung, when he came to power, the current president, said that OPCON needed to be returned to him before the end of his term in 2030. And Brunson has said there can be no timeline.

In other words, 76 years is not enough, is never good enough for you. South Korea originally set deadlines for the return of OPCON. In 2003, the U.S. agreed it would return by 2012. And then in 2010, suddenly there was this massive escalation on the peninsula. A Korean ship was sunk, and all of a sudden OPCON became, you know, you couldn't transfer OPCON anymore. And then they said in 2014, 2017, we will return it on a conditions-based—if certain conditions are met. And those conditions are essentially, can South Korea defend itself? Does it have interoperability, et cetera? The answer to all of those questions is yes. It's yes, yesterday.

But there's a third clause which essentially says, are the conditions stable enough for OPCON transfer? And this is the catch-22. This is the thing that's designed to undermine the transfer or the return of OPCON. Because if you say that there has to be a conducive security environment, that is to say, literally the security environment on the Korean Peninsula and in the broader region, i.e., China, must be stable and conducive to a safe, uninterrupted transfer. That's the catch-22. So, you know, they say it's conditions-based. We say you have to pass certain tests, but if conditions are stable, then they won't do the tests because these are tied to field exercises that they de-escalate when they don't feel they need them.

But if they do, and the conditions are escalated, North Korea responds very badly to field war games. Then again, the tensions have been increased, and then the security conditions are not met. It's not safe to transfer. So this is a formula for ensuring OPCON is never transferred. But I really want to highlight that it does not take 20, 30 years to transfer OPCON. In wartime, OPCON is simply signed over rapidly, and it's returned rapidly. That's what should happen. But it's not being returned because the U.S. requires, or wants, South Korean troops to wage war against China. 3.6 million troops is a lot of cannon fodder, and they do not want to give that up. And that is the key reason why the United States is holding on to OPCON for dear life.

It's trying to create these kind of weird Rube Goldberg structures where it's trying to parallel a horizontal command, and it's trying to do these Rube Goldberg carve-outs. And there is already a Rube Goldberg carve-out, because they say that, well, you know, we don't really control South Korean OPCON. We only have wartime OPCON. That's actually a nonsense statement, because operational control means operations are warfighting. So essentially, they're saying that we only have wartime warfighting control. That's a tautology. It's a pleonasm. The only time control of the military matters is during fighting, just as the only time control of a car matters is when you're steering it and it's moving.

So this notion that they have returned peacetime OPCON—they say they returned, in 1994, peacetime OPCON to South Korea—this is a booby prize. It's like one of those toy steering wheels that you stick on the dashboard for children so they can pretend they're steering while somebody actually drives. It's a political toy. So it gives the illusion of control, but it means nothing. And the simple fact is that the U.S. will not transfer OPCON because it doesn't share command. When you say joint control, shared command, the U.S. never shares control, will not share control with the South Korean general. So, you know, essentially it's a fraud.

And you also know it's a fraud because the U.S. gets to decide when is peacetime and when is wartime, right? If you decide when the car is driven and who gets to drive it, it's your car and only you can drive it. If that's the case, then it's that person's car. And anybody who spends time around it when it's still in the garage, they're the maintenance crew. It's essentially, if one party decides who gets control, when it has control, then they have control. And so this notion that it only has wartime OPCON is a red herring. You know, you slice the cake, you decide which portion to take, and you decide when to eat it. It's your bloody cake. So the U.S. is holding on to OPCON. It needs control over Korean troops because it's planning for war with China in the Pacific.

It wants the cannon fodder: 3.6 million troops. South Korea is one of the most powerful, the most advanced militaries in the world, the fifth most powerful military in the world. And it also has, unlike many other countries, a defense industrial base to sustain it. And on top of that, South Koreans have always fought in U.S. wars. More military-aged men saw fighting in Vietnam than Americans, as a portion of the population. And it was the third largest deployment to Iraq. So the U.S. avoids a draft because South Korea has one. And this notion that it doesn't control OPCON is just a political stunt. It really has to do with the embarrassment when South Korean troops massacred civilians in Gwangju in 1980. And since then—or before then, and since then—they've been involved in multiple military coups and coup attempts.

The U.S. wants that kind of, you know, plausible deniability there, at the same time that it still wants to control South Korea's military as a proxy for war. So you get this crazy quilt of parallel unified command structures, multiple command authorities, phased operating assessments, and you have this Frankenstein-cobbled leadership structure. But essentially, they want their cake cooked and to eat it too. And they're assisted by far-right factions in South Korea who have lashed themselves to

the U.S. empire, and they see any loss of U.S. control as loss of their own power and status. And so there's a vast nexus of Quislings and subcontractors to U.S. empire that are used as the pretext. They say, "Oh, well, South Korea wants to keep us there."

It's like all those—every time the U.S. says, you know, we are in a certain country because they want us to be there. That's absolute nonsense. The same thing with those who claim that South Korea wants the U.S. to, you know, maintain OPCON. The Koreans don't want the U.S. to give up OPCON. That's a kind of nonsense statement, colonial propaganda. But the real risk here is that the U.S. is using its proxies. It does not want to give up its proxies. And that signals that the U.S. has not given up any of its ambitions for war with China. And so it is a very, very dangerous situation. Lee Myung-bak is trying hard to reclaim OPCON. Let's hope he does that in a real substantive fashion. But if he doesn't, it will be catastrophic because it means that the U.S. has a license and a kind of, you know, moral hazard that it will use to escalate to war against China.

#Danny

So what's so striking about this, KJ, in this show so far, we've talked about strike plans against Iran, Ansar Allah, a really disastrous war there. And now we're talking about the United States empire having a difficult time, or at least achieving anything through its proxies, but still wanting that control. So deep into the game of trying to control its proxies that it even tries to treat Iran as a proxy and say, "Oh, let us strike you." I feel like we've come to the point where there's just so much desperation and also the thirst for power. And of course, the longer that failures kind of mount, the more intense this push for dominance and control becomes, not least because the opposite is just completely intolerable.

And now there are consequences that we don't often get to talk about, but maybe we can. On the economic front, we often talk about runaway inflation. We often talk about the oil crisis and the price of oil and all of this. But really, those are just the symptoms of a massive problem with the economic foundations of this empire. And we have massive protests in France, which are engulfing the country. We have Emmanuel Macron commenting today on these, saying there's no room for violence in our Republic. Those who have broken and attacked prefectures, businesses, looted our town halls will be prosecuted. Law enforcement forces guarantee the right to demonstrate. I express the support of the nation.

We will stand against the sowers of chaos who seek to bring down our institutions and prevent those who peacefully express their demands from doing so, referencing the student protests that are happening there. KJ, Time Magazine—I didn't even want to read this because Time Magazine is a rag for the neocons—but why is France burning? Why is it that there is this revolt in France, KJ? And what does it say about the overall foundations of this empire? Because it's the United States at the head, but it's a system that encompasses the West, and they're supposed to be driving it toward

their aims and objectives. And the consequences of it economically almost entirely focus on things like inflation and the oil crisis, but it's much deeper than that. And so, please help us understand what's going on here, and what does it reflect?

#KJ Noh

Well, inflation and collapse of living standards are surface phenomena of the deep contradictions of capitalism. But most notably, in the case of France, it's the neoliberal austerity that the government is trying to force on the people. It has to cut somewhere in the range—it wants to cut about \$48 billion from social services, from a system that is already cut to the bone, which you see, for example, in French schools, where one out of 10 teachers is missing. You know, the classrooms are falling to pieces. Students are being warehoused. Their toilets are overflowing, and the rats are running around, and there's, you know, no air conditioning in schools in the summer and no heat in the winter. So all of these are legitimate claims for the students to protest. And in the past, for example, in the 1990s, when they came out with these legitimate demands, the government would actually make reasonable accommodations.

They cannot do that anymore because they are firmly set on this road of austerity, because they are dealing with massive war costs. France has already committed \$23 billion to Ukraine, and those costs are going to continue to increase at the same time that it has 112% national debt. So it cannot balance the books, and essentially, it is cutting things to the bone. And the French people are not going to take it. Most certainly, the students are expressing what they feel is legitimate in, quote-unquote, a democracy. But the bigger and deeper picture of it is not simply that the war is draining the coffers of all European states because the U.S. has demanded that they spend 5% of GDP on the military. That's a target that they cannot meet. For decades, they were unable to meet 2%. How are they going to meet 5% targets?

And at the same time, you see, as the multipolar world is arising and it is completing the process of decolonization, France is no longer able to do the kind of one-sided, unfair colonial extraction that it was capable of doing. Remember, France controlled about a third of Africa. Its wealth came from colonies in Africa and Southeast Asia, et cetera. Michelin, the tire company, those were rubber plantations, essentially slave plantations, in Southeast Asia, et cetera. So French culture and French power and French wealth is built on colonial extraction. And now that the process of decolonization is happening in concrete ways in the African countries, for example, France is struggling and is facing a severe crisis in economic conditions.

I would say it's facing an existential crisis. So add to that the internal contradictions where it can no longer sustain the conditions of living that it used to pay off a labor aristocracy, then you are going to get those contradictions bubbling to the fore in terms of mass protest. Now, when Macron says there is no room for violence, he's lying through his teeth because we know that what he's imposing

on the vast majority of peaceful protesters is mass police violence. The sowers of chaos are actually the police, but he's doubling down on this fascistic violence because essentially France is reverting to its fascist roots.

Anybody who spent time in France knows that there is a deep strain of right-wing fascism inside the French body politic, and he's tapping right back into that. And he's using, quote unquote, the forces of order, where these fascistic tendencies are concentrated, and using them to see if you can bash enough heads so that the French will submit. Well, the French have said, "No, we will not submit. These are reasonable demands. We need to claim back our country." And the students are—students, not simply now the high school students, but also some university students, are joining us.

They're also being joined by the Yellow Vests, you know, which is a worker rebellion or worker resistance. And so I think Macron has a very, very dangerous powder keg on his hands. Is he going to double down further on this militaristic policy, violence, and repression? It's very possible. I think most European countries have reverted to greater or lesser degrees—I would say greater degrees—of fascism in tamping down their terminal contradictions. I mean, fascism is simply capitalism in decline. But I think things are going to get much, much worse, both for Macron, but also, unfortunately, for the French people.

#Danny

Well, there are some scenes coming out right now we can take a look at. Here are some of the videos coming out of protesters and what some are calling rioters attacking the police, essentially, because, as you said, the police have been attacking them. I mean, there is a long history of that. You can simply... And then there's also supposedly protesters are marching toward the presidential palace in France right now, many declaring that Macronism, as it's been called—a disastrous, dastardly word, in my opinion—but Macronism is essentially over. But it seems like it's been that way for a while. KJ, what this reflects to me, it seems, is something that's happening across the combined West and even the United States.

The legitimacy of these governments is not just waning, but essentially collapsing to zero. And it's so interesting to see these scenes that are reminiscent of what the neocons, imperialists, they try to paint onto Iran, China, Russia. They try to say, "Oh, these countries are so unstable, and they repress their own populations." The scenes coming out of France seem to indicate that that is more true for the combined West itself. And we know what the U.S. does when there are massive protests here. Your thoughts on this? The scenes coming out are only going to get worse, it seems, as, you know, France—there's a history here. France tends to, at least in the West, people there tend to really move fast and hard when things like this emerge. Your thoughts?

#KJ Noh

Well, you know, as we know, France has a history of revolution and revolt. In 1789, in May 1968, the coalition of workers and students actually brought down the government. So France has a history of rebellion and resistance. But in this time round, I think that it is not going to be as easy as it was in 1968 or in 1995 or other periods where, you know, protesters were able to get real concessions or even substantive change in the structure of the political economy. I think the key thing to remember is, in 2008, Nicolas Sarkozy was the president, and he said one of the few accurate things that he ever uttered. He said, "Laissez-faire, c'est fini." Capitalism is finished.

And he understood that because when the global economic and financial system collapsed in 2008, he understood that was the death knell of capitalism. And that's when everybody should have been pivoting towards a different type of political economy. Instead, they doubled down on neoliberal austerity. And we've had just a series of successions of neoliberal reforms in France, where things are simply getting pared closer and closer to the bone. The muscle and the sinew have been shaved off, and now we're scraping marrow. And the French can't go on that way indefinitely. It's also tied to the fact, the loss of the imperial extraction, the unfair, you know, extraction from the colonies. All of this has created deep and fundamental contradictions in France métropole, the, you know, the center of colonial France.

And it's also been aggravated by this war against Russia. Now, originally, the war against Russia was actually another type of imperial expansion. They would, you know, destroy Russia, and then they would carve it out, and it would be another, you know, colonial expansion boondoggle or windfall. Russia has fought back. They are losing the war against Russia, this proxy war using Ukraine. And so conditions are simply getting harder and harder. And so, you know, just the symbolism of Place de la République, where the revolution itself was declared, I think that is important. But the French system is heading towards terminal collapse, as are the systems of most of the European countries. Not just France, Spain, UK, Germany, all of them are facing critical structural crises.

And there's no good way out of it. And instead of fundamentally transforming their political economy, they've lashed themselves down to further neoliberal austerity, further destruction of their social welfare net, and further doubling down on war. That is, they're going to put, you know, billions, billions into the war, billions into Ukraine, and they're going to defund most of their education and other services. This is an act of madness, but this is what the ruling imperial class want. This is how they think. The simple fact is that, you know, it's like being addicted to a drug. Hegemony is one hell of a drug, and they simply cannot let go of it. They would rather destroy everything than let go of their addiction to power.

#Danny

Well, KJ, it's been a great show today. I think that might be a good place to end it. Everyone should hit the like button before you go. That helps boost the show in the algorithm. KJ, do you have any final words before we head out? Anything we didn't get to hit on?

#KJ Noh

Well, I just want to do just another plug for the taxpayer uprising that CODEPINK is leading from November 10th to November 12th in Washington, D.C. There are three days of peaceful protest and resistance. So essentially, they're saying, you know, we have a \$1.5 trillion war budget, probably closer to \$2.3 trillion, but at least on paper, a \$1.5 trillion war budget. And that is gutting our society, just as it's gutting France and Europe. It is also gutting our society. We feel it. All we have to do is look around in our environment. We see the incredible immiseration, hopelessness, homelessness. You know, over 1.5 percent of the U.S. population lives in absolute poverty. Forty percent do not have \$500 to their name. Sixty percent do not have \$1,000 to their name. The immiseration is getting worse and worse.

And a large part of it is because we are endlessly manufacturing enemies—Iran, China, Russia—and endlessly spending our national wealth on... And so this is a demand that CODEPINK is making to put pressure on Congress, as is our democratic right, to the extent that it still exists, is to put pressure on the incoming Congress and put the politicians of both parties, including the Democrats, on notice that they have to turn this war-making, greed-driven, ecocidal ship around. And I think that this is really, really important. It's gotten, you know, it's supported by most of the major peace and social justice organizations. And you can go to CODEPINK, look for the Taxpayer Uprising, and give your support to it. It's one of the concrete things that we can do in this terrible, terrible moment where everything is hitting the fan and we are confused as to what to do. This is one very, very concrete action that everybody can take.

#Danny

Right, and I published this link in the video description below, which you can find, which will describe what it is, what KJ just described here, a campaign that's very important. We should all support it. You could go. You could sign up. You could donate. You could volunteer, participate online, whatever you want to do. But the link in the video description is below. After the show, hit the like button, everybody. That helps boost the show in YouTube's algorithm. Also, you'll find all the places to support this channel in the video description below, too: Patreon, Substack, and much more. Tomorrow, I'll be back 1 p.m. Eastern time with Professor Mohammad Marandi. I'll see you all then at 1 p.m. Eastern time. Until next time, everybody.