

US Plays With Total War Insanity | Patrick Henningsen

The Iran War is a multi-decade history of step-by-step escalation to get to total war and the peak of the strategy is around the corner. Today I'm speak with Patrick Henningsen, American journalist, geopolitical analyst, and founder of 21st Century Wire. Links: Patrick Henningsen on 21st Century Wire: <https://21stcenturywire.com> Patrick Henningsen on Substack: <https://patrickhenningsen.substack.com> Watch the SUNDAY WIRE show on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@21stCenturyWireTV> Follow Patirck's daily short reports on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/21wire_media/ Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch & Donations: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:17 Iran trip before the war 00:04:20 Protests and street evidence 00:08:23 Riot playbook and covert tactics 00:14:27 Media alignment and propaganda 00:20:17 Plans chaos and US interests 00:25:22 Lobby power and cabinet picks 00:40:31 Covert influence and sovereignty 00:52:17 Trump posts and market shocks

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today we're joined by Patrick Henningsen, an American journalist, geopolitical analyst, and founder of the independent news and analysis website 21st Century Wire. Patrick, welcome.

#Patrick Henningsen

My pleasure. Great to be with you, Pascal.

#Pascal

Thank you so much for taking the time, because you were actually in Iran very recently, right? About a week before the war broke out, you came back to the US and Europe. Can you tell us a little bit about why you went there and what you saw? You also said that having a war with Iran would be a huge mistake. Could you tell us how you came to that assessment?

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, well, thanks, Pascal. Let's start with that. I was there a couple of weeks before the bombs dropped. I left Iran just over a week before the latest round of hostilities resumed. My main reason for going was that I knew there was a small window of opportunity. It could have been attacked at

any moment, and the U.S. was positioning its naval assets in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman, while threats were being made by the Trump administration. At the same time, they were engaged in these nuclear negotiations which, if history is any guide, could possibly be used as cover for a sneak attack again. The Iranians understood that, but they were obliged to go through the process.

But we all knew—and I knew—that if I went later, it might be too late. The airports might be closed, or the airport might not even be there, full stop. There was also the risk of being stranded and not being able to leave if a major war started. And not only that, Pascal, but I realized back in December and January that the narrative of these protests—supposedly this massacre of 30,000 democratic, peaceful protesters—was so important because I knew from previous wars that this would be used as the moral cause, the moral justification for the war, whether half the population in America was against it or not. That background moral argument is really important. They did the same thing with Saddam Hussein. They did the same thing with Muammar Gaddafi.

They've done the same thing in Yugoslavia and Syria—especially under Trump. You have to remember, Pascal, that when Trump got elected, the swing vote, the independent vote, included a lot of anti-war populists, conservatives. That was part of the MAGA coalition. And, you know, whether those people were against the war or for the war—and I'll include centrist Democrats in there as well—there were anti-war populists, Democrats, liberals who were against interventions, not just against Trump but against war in general. But still, in America, you have to understand the psychology here: people will say, "I'm against the war, but this is an evil regime, and it's probably better if there's regime change. The world's a better place if Ayatollah Khamenei is dead."

And they did the same with Saddam Hussein. This was the British argument: "Well, we regret the war, but," as Tony Blair said, "you can't argue the world's not a better place without Saddam in it." So that narrative is really important. I needed to know whether that actually happened or not. I was fortunate enough to get access to some of the evidence from the police there and to look at the damage done by these rioters and agent provocateurs. They burned Iranian unarmed police. The riot police don't carry weapons—like many riot police in Europe, they're not armed. They carry shields, billy clubs, and helmets. Many of them were burned alive. I counted eight from the evidence I saw. It was really violent, these riots. Right.

#Pascal

Sorry, I just—I kind of didn't... Of course, there were the riots. But when I asked you about what you saw there, I forgot that you went right after the riots and before the war, in that window, that period of time. So, you were trying to investigate the riots—was that the primary motivation to go?

#Patrick Henningsen

That, and also just to see what society was like, because there were two things. We were told the country was on the verge of collapse, that people were rising up against the government, that the

country was fractured, and that this massive massacre had taken place. So those were the two things. The first thing—I arrived on the national day, which is like the equivalent of their Independence Day—and I went straight to the center of Tehran. There were about two million people out on the streets supporting the government, all knowing they could be bombed at any minute because the threats were already being issued by the United States.

And so I saw that massive support, that massive solidarity for the government, for the supreme leader. And you knew at that point that at least that part of the story in the Western narrative was totally fabricated. Later, we had time to look at burned buses, burned EMS vehicles, firemen and nurses who were killed. Hundreds of police were murdered. A lot of innocent bystanders were killed as well. Some police were burned alive—petrol poured on them and then set on fire by these so-called peaceful protesters who came on the back of legitimate economic protests in December. These were the merchant class, the traders, and so forth, protesting because of sanctions and the collapse in the currency that was engineered from the outside, by the way.

#Pascal

Scott Besant actually boasted about it. He openly said, “We collapsed the Iranian economy. Ha, ha, ha.” It’s not even a secret.

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, and we can get back to that discussion later if you want, which is this economic warfare formula that I've studied over the years. That same formula was carried out against Syria, against Venezuela, against Russia—not successfully—but also against, obviously, Cuba and some of these other countries, permanently sanctioned. North Korea, permanently sanctioned countries. Same thing happened here. You know, for, I think, 10 euros, it would be the equivalent of 1.5 million Iranian rials. So just to go have lunch, you’d need one and a half million rials. I mean, walking around with a stack of bills like this. And I saw the same thing happen in Syria. I saw the attempt at this in Lebanon as well, because they did try to engineer a currency crash right before COVID, or right after COVID, or right around the COVID period in Lebanon.

So the same thing happened here. Anyway, that was a legitimate protest, and it was quickly co-opted and hijacked—very much by outside forces. The evidence suggests that. I also saw in Syria, during the Arab Spring, how they had a way of ginning up mobs, partly by distributing drugs. So this was something I’d seen before in Syria and knew about there, and I saw the same thing here. We spoke to the police about it; there were accusations along those lines. So, I mean, this is a formula. If you look at the Maidan in February 2014, what happened there is very similar. The same type of operation was attempted in Tehran—but with no success, because the society, as I learned, is totally different in Iran. It’s very resilient, and it’s not what people in the West think it is.

#Pascal

How does that formula work? Because, okay, I see how you can, from the outside, create some form of social crisis. I mean, with the Maidan, it was ratcheted up—allegations of corruption and mismanagement. And of course, things aren't going well, right? If a country is under a lot of stress, especially if the United States and Europe put their minds to it, to put it under stress, then yes, things won't go well. But then, to get from just people going into the streets to actually organizing a protest is a difficult thing, right? Because you need to get the word out, you need to organize things, you need banners, you need timing, you need people to carry the banners and all that.

This all costs money and so on, and it's an organizational effort. But then, on top of that, getting violence to happen—how do you do that? I mean, with the Maidan, we know that these forces were talking to the ultra-right-wing nationalist extremists. Some call them Nazis; I like to call them ultra-right-wing, but whatever. And then they start shooting. But with Iran, how did they manage to get the violence in? Because I think societies in Europe and the U.S. are just not used to this type of organized destruction through protests.

#Patrick Henningsen

Well, normally you have outside provocateurs—key people coming in. They're very skilled, very well trained. We saw this in Homs in the early days of the Syrian destabilization, where you'd have snipers firing into the crowd, hitting both protesters and police, or using the crowd as human shields to fire at police and get the police to fire back. This was also done in Maidan and elsewhere. Evidence suggests—and there's peer-reviewed work on this; I might have even interviewed the author of that recent book about these provocateurs and snipers—that gunmen were brought in to create the exchange of fire.

And then it's the image from the media of the police firing back that the West values most in shaping the narrative. This has been done many, many times. It's not something new—it's like the next level of a color revolution. So if you really want to escalate a color revolution—the Revolution of the Roses, the Orange Revolution, or whatever—and make it turn violent, there are specific tactics that get deployed. And these were definitely deployed. It was like chapter and verse from other similar revolutions, case studies we've looked at in other countries.

#Pascal

But actually, you need to fool a lot of people, right? Uh, you give money to them and tell them, "Let's go have a peaceful protest." And in the end, you start shooting them in the back to get the bloodbath you need, right? That's part and parcel of it, I suppose.

#Patrick Henningsen

It's very sinister. Yeah. That's it—it's chaos you want. You want confusion. And then the U.S. and Israel tried to capitalize on this by making public calls at that time for the people to rise up and take

over their institutions. I mean, imagine Donald Trump telling you to rise up and take over the institutions—Netanyahu was doing the same. And then we had admissions on the Israeli and American side that their intelligence services were active on the ground. And I probably think the British were as well, because there's nothing going on there that the British wouldn't also be involved in alongside the Americans. So they have pedigree in that sense.

So it's not surprising. But the real surprise was that Iran was able to recover, maintain order, and control the situation—and also intercept the Starlink terminals that were sent in. They shut down the internet, and that very quickly quieted things down. The accusations coming from the West were, "Oh, look, this dictatorial regime shuts down the internet because they're against free speech." No—well, they shut down the internet to stop the organizers who were coordinating with outside forces. And we heard that Germany was a hub of organization. My guess is that the U.S. bases there—Stuttgart and Ramstein—and the large NSA station were involved.

And so this could very well be because, when they did the Green Revolution in 2009, the United States was micromanaging that on English-language Twitter at the time. And they used massive—this was before those big APIs that you can now get off the shelf to manage multiple accounts. The U.S. military had already developed all that, so one person could manage fifty accounts. And that's how they helped to, let's say, accelerate the Green Revolution online in 2009 in Iran. And that most likely was also being done out of Germany or directly out of the United States at the time. So these things have been tried and done more than once in different countries.

#Pascal

Yeah, definitely. It's just interesting that it keeps working—and that Western media keeps, you know, staying online, right? They stick to the narrative and keep following, keep falling for the same stupid pretense time and time again. Although I must say, the European media this time—if I compare the war now with the war against Iraq—is more critical. But still, what you just laid out, this kind of "Oh, we're against the war, but you have to get rid of the mullahs," keeps repeating in talk shows and so on.

Do you have any indication if these—because there are journalists, mainstream journalists, on the ground in West Asia—but the honest ones, like, uh, what's his name, the New York Times bureau chief from about twenty years ago, Chris Hedges? Yeah, Chris Hedges. The others then leave, right? They go out and become Chris Hedges, reporting honestly about what actually happened. But the others—how do they stay in line? Do you have any indication of how they think about this? Do they believe this stupid narrative, or are they willingly complicit?

#Patrick Henningsen

Well, while I was there, it was interesting. There were three mainstream journalists there at the same time as me—one from the BBC, one from Sky News, and Richard Engel. And then I think

Frederik Pleitgen from CNN, who's actually been doing pretty decent, you know, objective journalism for CNN. So he's one of the better ones, I think. But the BBC reporter, at the same national rally day that I was at, the BBC put out this report of people chanting "death to the regime." And I'm like, where is this taking place? Because it's definitely not happening out here. So maybe they found some group of people, or they assembled some situation, or I don't know. But Richard Engel is quite a journeyman.

He used to work for NBC. He got caught in a scandal in Syria where they sort of faked a kidnapping. I don't know if you remember reading about that years ago. But, you know, these are veteran, kind of, let's say, information warfare people in the mainstream. So I don't want to get into his reporting. It's pretty—it's pretty amazing. But, you know, they manage to slide into these situations, these mainstream people, and some of them are just about on the edge. And I guess Iran can kind of tolerate that to some degree. But I think the patience is wearing thin. Russia doesn't even entertain some of these people anymore because they're just putting out absolutely fabricated reports sometimes.

But they're still allowed—you know, they still allow the BBC correspondent in Moscow, or Matthew Chance from CNN, to roam around and do the usual thing. But I think people are getting wise to the reporting because there's a good variety of sources to look at and compare. They realize what the mainstream is pushing—their track record is just so horrendous, especially in a war situation. Then you start seeing the real propaganda come in. When the shots start firing and, you know, when it hits the fan, you just wait and see who's really going to go for it and push some of the most egregious propaganda.

And sometimes you see the usual suspects doing that, but this one's different, Pascal, you know? A couple of CNN reporters leaked—or reported—that Trump and the CIA were arming Iranian Kurds over the border in the KRG, Iraqi Kurdistan, saying this was going to be problematic for Trump. It was almost like preempting something. Clarissa Ward was pushing that out on her personal social media account, and she's done incredible propaganda in war zones over the years. I was just like, wow, why are they doing this now? This could potentially compromise a covert action by Trump or the CIA to arm these Kurdish proxies and send them into Iran to wreak havoc and destabilize the region.

So, like, is this an anti-Trump thing in the United States? Are these journalists who somehow, you know, had an epiphany and are actually doing real journalism? It's really difficult to tell. Or is it the change of ownership at CNN? I don't know. But we saw—I think it was Natasha Bertrand and Clarissa Ward—put out that story, and I was shocked because, you know, they've always been regime-change queens and propaganda warriors for the Pentagon, essentially, over the years. And somehow we saw a break of ranks in parts of the mainstream coverage of this conflict that I've never seen before in my lifetime. So that's a new thing.

#Pascal

Is it possible that what we're seeing here is not a conflict of interest, but a conflict of neocon conscience—people who do want this war, but on the other hand just can't bring themselves to completely support Trump because, you know, at heart they're with the other side of the uniparty?

#Patrick Henningsen

I think so. I think there's probably even a split at the intelligence level. We've seen the resignations recently of Joe Kent, so there's not a unanimity of thought in the United States and Washington on this, definitely. Maybe within the White House, the inner circle of Trump and the Republican Party is pretty much a whipped line. But outside of that, even, there are some people setting themselves up as dissenters on this. Even Chuck Schumer is trying to backpedal.

The Democratic minority leader in the Senate is trying to backpedal, basically saying this war is unlawful and that we should invoke the War Powers Act—a little too little, too late, in my opinion, because they could have pushed that before the war. They could have had that vote before the war. But Democrats were sandbagging, including Chuck Schumer. Now they're coming out trying to position themselves as, you know, against Trump's illegal war. So it's just politics as usual. But no, I think there are definitely dissenting opinions and people among the ranks. I believe we'll see more high-profile resignations the longer this situation drags on.

#Pascal

So how are you interpreting the situation? I mean, on the one hand, you could argue this is the war the neocons always wanted. On the other hand, you could say maybe this is plan B or plan C—you know, if you start with plan A being the 12-day war that didn't work, plan B being the January riots that were supposed to get rid of the regime and didn't work, and now we're in plan C. Or you could take the approach of Brian Berletic's interpretation, which is like, no, no, this has always been the goal. There's no concrete plan; it's just always push, push, push, break, break, break. And the chaos we're seeing isn't an unintended consequence. It's not Trump screwing up—it's exactly what was intended, not just for Iran but for the entire region, because it destabilizes not only them, it also impedes the further development of China and benefits the United States. So the entire chaos is actually wanted. How do you interpret this?

#Patrick Henningsen

I mean, there are different ways you can look at this, depending on which way you're leaning. I mean, myself, I'm American. I'm here right now in America. I vote as well, so I'm part of the political process, even though I'm a journalist. So you have to ask yourself the question: if this is some grand master plan, can someone explain to me what is in America's interest in what we've witnessed unfold over the last three weeks? Because I personally can't see it.

You know, even during the neoconservative period—that unipolar moment—from the late 1990s, post-9/11, up to the Iraq War, many people look at that and say, well, what exactly did the U.S. gain from Iraq and that whole decade, that complete debacle? Yeah, some corporations definitely got rich—people like Balfour Beatty, Halliburton, all those companies rebuilding Iraq, the military-industrial complex. Yeah, they all got rich. Afghanistan, same thing. It kept NATO “out of area” and relevant, but in the long term, it really damaged NATO and the United States’ efforts there.

So if we look at this situation and how it’s been carried out, the U.S. has alienated all of its allies. It’s now lost an incredible amount of credibility. You have to understand the source of U.S. power post–World War II: it’s through the international institutions, through the multilateral institutions. By leveraging their relationships and the trust built through these institutions—whether the U.S. would follow international law or not is beside the point. We can get into that discussion. There are two tiers of international law, obviously. People who say, “Oh, international law is dead, so just forget about it”—that’s not true. The United States, Israel, and Britain might not follow it, but the rest of the world does, and they have to.

#Pascal

They demand that we follow it. So yeah, I'm absolutely with you on that one.

#Patrick Henningsen

You have to, because otherwise it's chaos—and who’s going to reign supreme in a chaotic environment? In the realist sense, that would be the rogue hegemons. So the mid-tier and lower-tier powers have to bandwagon together, and international law, that framework, is essential. Iran’s a perfect example. It’s a different society; they have a different constitution. Their religion and faith are at the absolute core, at the center of their political economy. That’s not the same as in the United States. That’s not the same as in European countries. So you need an intermediary system or a network where countries can communicate and resolve disputes, and that is the international system. Whether the U.S. has trashed it or not, it exists so that different countries can meet in the middle—that there’s some common framework, diplomatic and so on.

#Pascal

And they will meet, you know, just to throw that in there. Just because Israel blows up a consulate—the Iranian consulate in Damascus—and breaches international law in a huge way, right, and, you know, commits a very, very serious infringement of the Vienna Convention and so on, that doesn't mean that suddenly Armenia and Azerbaijan are going to start blowing up consulates around the world. I mean, Japan doesn't do it to China, China doesn't do it to Portugal, and so on. The system remains in place. It's just that you've got a criminal over there who manages to get away with it. But that doesn't invalidate the system.

#Patrick Henningsen

Absolutely. It doesn't invalidate diplomatic successes over the years. Even the U.S. has brokered some diplomatic successes. For instance, the JCPOA—it was basically a double insurance policy to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon that they weren't developing anyway. But it was a double layer of insurance. And, you know, some people will point to the Brookings Institution paper from 2010, **Which Path to Persia?**, and highlight a specific passage in there and say, "Oh, look, they planned to pull the rug on the JCPOA and then blame it on the Iranians. This was the plan all along." Well, listen, it took two years to put that deal together. It had guarantors—Russia, the P5+1, all the European countries, the United States. A lot of people sunk a lot of political capital into that deal to make it work.

And it did what it was intended to do. It stabilized the situation, turned the alarm down, and lifted sanctions on Iran, and so forth. Now, what you also have to remember is this doesn't happen in a vacuum, right? Look at who funds the Brookings Institution—some of the biggest Zionist Israeli donors. So you might think you're reading U.S. policy, but there's something behind it. People don't just throw money around—the Israeli lobby put \$600 million into the last election cycle on the Republican side, just Republican campaigns, including the White House. So \$600 million—that's over half a billion—unprecedented sums of money have been injected into the U.S. political system. Do you think that doesn't have consequences? Do you think they're doing that just for fun?

Do you think they don't want anything in return? I mean, you really have to be living in complete denial not to realize that when the state of Israel was created by the British, it was definitely an imperial outpost—a beachhead for Anglo-imperial aspirations as part of the Great Game, and also about controlling oil flowing through the Suez Canal, and so on. Then the Americans took over custodianship of the state of Israel, I'd say after the Suez Crisis. That's when that phase began. The important point here is, yes, that is the tail and not the dog. The U.S. empire is the dog, but over time—over fifty or sixty years—that tail has grown into something massive, has metastasized, and is now threatening the health of the dog.

Because it's just the level of penetration, as John Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt, and others have shown over the years, that has now reached proportions far beyond what Mearsheimer and Walt described in their 2007 book on the Israel lobby. We're at much higher levels now in terms of influence and the money being injected into it. So what you're seeing is that U.S. imperial policy has something behind it—and that thing behind it is in the Clean Break document. It's interwoven into the neoconservative movement and absolutely surrounds this White House. Do you realize that the Israel lobby handpicked every cabinet member of the Trump administration who touches national security or foreign policy?

That's what six hundred million dollars buys you. And people equal policy in American politics. So you can't just brush that aside and say that's nothing. I'll give you proof of that, Pascal, because I haven't written extensively on this, but I've spoken about it. If you look at the history of U.S.

cabinets, normally a president will select from the diplomatic corps, the civil service, academia, or politics. Previous diplomats are often chosen for cabinet positions because anyone can perform a cabinet duty—it doesn't have to be a senator or a congressman. So why is it that Donald Trump was the first president in history to raid his own party's House seats, his own party's Senate seats—safe seats, long-term career seats?

These are senators and congressmen who would be there until they die, like Nancy Pelosi. And Trump pulled them out, risking the loss of that seat. Why? Why would he do that when anyone could fill those positions? The reason is—and this was discovered in the last election cycle, and even admitted by AIPAC—is that they were grooming all of those congressmen and senators from their first election. They already had established relationships. They had control over them in a way they wouldn't with someone coming out of academia or the civil service. The lobby had groomed them with campaign contributions, checks, all sorts of perks from day one, whether they won or lost their first election.

They're there. And that's why those were the shortlists given to Howard Lutnick and Jared Kushner—two pro-Israeli loyalists, especially Kushner. They managed the transition team for Trump's cabinet. Mary Madison had a hand in it, as did the big donors, probably Ronald Lauder and others. So you're looking at something that's never happened in U.S. history. And I'll prove that's the case, because one of the biggest donors to the Obama administration in 2008 was Wall Street. Citibank gave the shortlist for Obama's cabinet, and nearly every name on that list became part of his cabinet.

#Pascal

And that was when Larry Summers became Treasury Secretary, wasn't it? Yeah.

#Patrick Henningsen

That would have been possibly Timothy Geithner. It might have been Tim Geithner and Hank Paulson as well. I'll have to go back and review that.

#Pascal

So basically, I mean, yeah—the donors had a hand in the shortlist. Yeah, makes good sense.

#Patrick Henningsen

So the tail has grown out of control, and that tail is absolutely wagging the dog. There are a hundred different ways they could have contained Iran if the goal was dominance. The U.S. has now given up its footprint around the Persian Gulf and won't be able to maintain the military dominance and positioning it once had because of what it's done—the massive risk, the recklessness of this undeclared, unprovoked war of aggression with Israel. And I can't see how that serves U.S. empire.

I think they've done themselves more damage abroad and at home as a result of what we've seen. So I can't see how that fits into the master plan of American imperial dominance. I think this is something else we're looking at here.

#Pascal

Yeah, I'm really glad you're making these points because, you know, the argument by Brian Berletic—who, by the way, I've tried to get on my show for a long time, but I just can't reach him, unfortunately—I take that very seriously. I think he's trying to point out that even if there isn't a teleological kind of approach, there are plans, there are policy papers that spell this out, there are people who spell it out, and then there are downstream actions that start matching what happened back then. So we do have a kind of stream of direction, right? On the other hand, we lack this sort of, well, master planning—yes, the nefarious people in the room who do all the puppeteering—but we do see that some of these attempts are being made, right? At the puppeteering.

But it is a feedback loop, right? And it's not the first time empires hand over power to former terrorist groups. I mean, the current government of Israel is basically the outgrowth of a couple of terrorist organizations from the 1920s and '30s that attacked the British. They blew up British hotels in Palestine, right? And then they morphed, became useful, and were put into power. And that's also not the first time we've seen that. I mean, right now, Syria is being run by somebody who was once listed as a terrorist with a five- or ten-million-dollar bounty on his head. So this is something that happens time and again, and then these power structures between the tail and the dog start shifting. So is it that one? And at the moment, we're just at peak tail—peak tail power.

#Patrick Henningsen

Well, yes, yes. I mean, look, people want to make this a binary argument—it's got to be one or the other. I think it's both. I think Israel and the U.S. have a symbiotic relationship, and the U.S. is quite happy for Israel to pursue its "Greater Israel" ambitions and its regional dominance there. At the same time, this could come at the detriment of U.S. power and influence globally, and it could mark the end of the U.S. empire in exactly the same way the Suez Crisis did—which was completely ham-fisted. The British, the French, and the Israelis had that plot that was later exposed, but that was the end of British dominance and control over the Middle East. From that point on, everyone had to go through the United States. The U.S. and the Soviet Union asserted themselves in the Suez Crisis, and that effectively changed the world order from that point forward.

And we're in that same paradigm now. What we're seeing here in Iran, with the Persian Gulf, is not exactly the same, but you have China and Russia somewhat playing a similar role—at least symbolically—in terms of power distribution, like the Soviet Union and the Americans did versus the old empire, the old world order, which was the British and the French in the Suez Crisis of 1956. So I'm talking about power shifts here, not the exact roles they played back then. And Gamal Abdel Nasser was definitely not the same as the Iranians, although he led a revolutionary government that

the West didn't know how to manage. The Americans were scared he was going to bolt for the Soviets, and they were also terrified of Arab nationalism.

And so there are some similar themes there. By the same token, the situation in Iran—what we're seeing now—comes from previous iterations of American and British interventions that created the current government, that created the Islamic Revolution. Because you have to remember, forget about the coup in '53. Everybody knows that's more or less straightforward if you're analyzing it as a coup—the overthrow of Mohammad Mossadegh and the installation of a fake monarch, a despot, the Shah of Iran. But what happened at the end of '79 is actually more interesting, because at that time, under Jimmy Carter, the Americans were terrified that the Iranians would go in a communist or socialist direction, that they would immediately ally with the Soviet Union—and that was just a no-go.

So the U.S. preferred an Islamic government—a right-wing, let's say, conservative Islamic one—over a left-wing alternative. It was a miscalculation by the U.S. on many levels, but that was their thinking. They were already backing a sort of Wahhabi Mujahideen next door in Afghanistan, which they were also using for the same reason, by the way, because of the emergence of very credible and strong left-wing governments in Afghanistan through the 1970s. So this was the thinking of the U.S. at the time. And it obviously backfired on them—or didn't, depending on how you want to analyze it—but definitely, I don't think it was the intended result.

I think the reason is that Americans, the British, and Europeans don't really appreciate how deep this civilization goes—how deep the society and the religious element in Iran run. You're talking about, just on the Islamic side, centuries of history, but beyond that, with the Persian identity of the people there, that's a 5,000-year-old civilization. Especially with the Islamic revival of Shiite intellectualism—this new type of political Islam that emerged out of 1979—it spread globally and had a big effect in Pakistan next door as well. And, you know, Americans aren't going to appreciate this. I'll tell you why, Pascal: because Americans and Westerners are cynical.

They don't think a government would actually put in its constitution that it must defend the oppressed. They'd say, "No, they're just evil mullahs—every government's corrupt. Nobody would put that at the center of their constitutional *raison d'être*." But Iran does. They're the real deal in that sense. The West won't accept that. They'll say, "No, no, no, they're just doing that, and their defense of the Palestinians is a cover for anti-Semitism. It's because they hate Jews and want to push Israel into the ocean." That's the cynicism of the West. We've lost connection with some of these deep, deep themes and purposes, and we project our cynicism onto everybody else.

In the same way that we have such low standards for our political leaders now in the West, we project that same standard onto everybody else. And that's not true. Other countries have a very high bar for what they'll accept as the leader of their country. Russia is a good example. So that's one of the differences. And the West will never—I don't think they're capable. I don't think we're capable in the West of grasping some of these concepts anymore. I think previous generations did more so, and definitely the British understood a lot of these things back when they had what they

called an Arab Camel Corps in the Foreign Office. But today, in the 21st century, I just don't see it in any of the words or commentary coming out of the West.

#Pascal

You know, these are very, very good observations that you made. And maybe the first one is also about the connection between '79 and '89—Iran and Afghanistan. I had a very interesting talk with David Gibbs, a professor at the University of Arizona, who pointed out that the United States, right before the Soviets actually invaded Afghanistan, had backed the communists, because they were the ones who held the most power in Afghanistan and had the most potential for upsetting the Soviets. To the point where the Soviet communists told the Afghan communists, "Tone it down—your revolutionary stuff is getting out of hand." And well, that's one thing. On the other hand, of course, there was the involvement of the CIA in '79 and the backing— I mean, the Iranian Revolution, if you want to simplify it, was like two factions coming together: the religious faction and the young, student, revolutionary, rather left faction, right?

And one over the other, and then massacred them as well. So there's probably a story to tell about this one too. And then, of course, the war—the manufactured war—where we now know the U.S. sold weapons to both sides, Iran and Iraq. And later on, how this entire spiel continues. It's just the level and sophistication, really, of the United States—being able to carry out these clandestine and covert actions, working on the ground with large sums of money, and actually having influence within these societies abroad. That, I think, is kind of unmatched and probably unparalleled in history. Or how do you see that?

#Patrick Henningsen

I think so. I think the other factor that's important—and all those things you said are key factors in this—but the other thing is, if you look at, let's compare the Islamic government in Iran. Okay, it's a revolutionary government. It's a dynamic government. It's a living government. After 47 years, it's still maintained its vigor as a revolutionary government. And we can see something similar with the Bolivarian Revolution as well—Venezuela particularly, but we could put Bolivia in that category up until recently too. And also the Ba'athist system between Iraq and Syria. The U.S., the West, and Israel had a very hard time subduing and cracking those.

It took them decades—many, many failed coups, many wars, many proxy wars—in order to, as they say, achieve the result we saw in Damascus at the end of 2024. It's not easy. These are anti-hegemonic movements. The basis of Bolivarian governments, or Ba'athist governments, or the Iranian Islamic Revolution is anti-hegemonic. It's a government in process that needs to become independent. They tend to be conservative. They also tend not to be anti-modern, but maybe you could say, by today's standards, Iran is very anti-woke—by today's Western definition. That's a bad way of putting it, but they're very anti-woke. So they're conservative, but also independent, sovereign—very important.

Iranians are fiercely sovereign—fiercely. So when they were under sanctions, they went immediately for import replacement, with no hesitation whatsoever. And also, in today's world, if you're not energy independent, then you have to cede a certain percentage of your sovereignty. Iran is energy independent. The point of their nuclear program—the civilian program—was because of sanctions on oil, because they realized their oil or gas could be taken offline in a war. They needed to hedge in order to provide the baseload power to run the country. So it wasn't necessarily to develop nuclear weapons, but that's what the West is projecting.

But now you can see from the strategy of what Israel and Trump are doing—threatening to destroy society by hitting their power stations, by taking their energy infrastructure offline—that's the endgame. Because when you do that, you can weaken a country to such a degree. Look at Cuba. Cuba is completely dependent on imported fuel, and the United States has closed off all the exit doors or entrance doors into Cuba, and they're strangling it. Look at Germany as a good example. Germany had a nuclear power fleet up until a few years ago, and through this very odd co-opting of the Green Party and the climate movement, and post-Fukushima, they shut down their nuclear power plants because of safety risks. Now, modern nuclear power plants are relatively safe, especially some of the newer fleet.

So this idea that Germany could fall by the wayside the way Japan did after Fukushima is just not a credible argument. Plus, Japan is on a fault line and has tsunamis and earthquakes. So why is that? Back in 2010, the Nord Stream pipeline came online, providing a direct natural gas supply to Germany from Russia. Then you had the so-called Nord Stream sabotage. And at that point, where was Germany? Well, Germany was now forced to buy its LNG from the United States at way over market prices. But not only that—they were firing up their coal plants. And guess what? They have to pay carbon indulgence taxes for coal, so that's keeping the carbon market buoyant there.

But why would it—it's just national suicide—why would an industrial powerhouse like Germany shut down its nuclear plants? Now look at Iran. You can see this is a strategy. I believe the strategy was to take Germany down. The United States wanted to pull it down a notch, weaken the EU, and make it totally dependent on U.S. energy. And they're attempting to do the same thing in other countries. I believe that if the U.S. had its way, it would force Iran—if they weren't going to give up their hydrocarbon industries—then the U.S. and Israel would destroy them and force them to import energy and import everything.

And that's the—so that is the model of colonial dependency, or neocolonial dependency. But it goes back to what we were saying earlier: sovereignty. Energy independence gives you sovereignty. And countries like Syria, Arab nationalist countries, revolutionary governments—they're fiercely sovereign. That's when they clash with other powers like the United States, like Israel, which has regional domination power. Israel wants to create a city-state in the vein of historic city-state empires, to have total control over commerce and trade flows through that part of the world, then demilitarize all their neighbors and make them completely subservient to West Jerusalem.

Yes. And that's the plan. They're very open about it now—you can see they're getting very cocky. Israeli high-level officials are bragging about ethnic cleansing. And look at what they're doing in Lebanon right now, in South Lebanon. I mean, that should be at least as bad, or worse. What Russia did in Ukraine, in eastern Ukraine, is nothing by comparison. Not to mention, Russia was just reacting to the collapse of UN Security Council Resolution 2202, which was the implementation of the Minsk Accords. That's what they were reacting to—a civil war situation.

This is just blatant barbarism by Israel, and they're doing it in broad daylight. Nobody is restraining them, and the United States is adopting Israeli doctrines now. The other thing that's dangerous, Pascal, is that we used to assume civilians in densely populated areas would not be targeted indiscriminately with modern military power. That's no longer an assumption factored into war games anymore, because after October 7th, the U.S. is now adopting Israel's Dahiya doctrine. So again, that merger of the U.S. and Israel in terms of their military doctrines—it's happening, you know.

#Pascal

Yeah, I mean, yes and no. On the "no" part, I'd say that if you look at the way the United States fought its wars in the past, I don't think we can find a moment when they seriously constrained, over a prolonged time, their bombings of civilians. I mean, Second World War—Germany and Japan, Hiroshima, Nagasaki—they didn't. And Korea—they didn't. They don't even try to hit the military installations; they go after the city centers, right, in order to achieve goals.

#Patrick Henningsen

I would say, yeah, post-Vietnam, Pascal—after Vietnam. Yeah, I would say Vietnam to Dresden, that was different, you know. That was just brutal savagery and medieval-style siege warfare. And we had some level of restraint post-Vietnam. The U.S. retooled its doctrine to rapid strike forces, air power, special forces—Donald Rumsfeld's doctrine. So the U.S. based all of its military interventions on that model: cruise missiles, standoff munitions. But now, with Trump, is that the way it's going to be? Or are we going back to the previous model now?

#Pascal

I mean, this absolutely huge test is, of course, going to be whether the U.S. and Israel are the same at that point—if this entity is going to use nuclear weapons. Because whether Israel uses them or the United States does, it's going to happen with the okay of the other one. That's for sure, right? Yes. If they use nukes, then again, we must assume that the U.S. goes from a strategy of trying to defeat the other side to annihilating the other side. And under a war of annihilation, we'll have the forms of what happened in Gaza, because Gaza is an annihilation and extermination mission, which works according to a different logic—also because it obviously doesn't leave any more room for the target of annihilation to negotiate, right? So...

#Patrick Henningsen

Annihilation. That's the word—the key word. Annihilation.

#Pascal

But attempting to annihilate a nation of 90 million people seems to me too crazy, even for this person in the White House. However, let me just, in the last couple of minutes we have, ask you this question, because it's been bugging me for a couple of days now. Who do you think is writing Donald Trump's tweets? I realized the other day that his tweets—his social media posts—are relatively long and don't contain spelling errors. In his first term, there were tons and tons of spelling errors in his tweets, which told me he wrote them himself. Now he doesn't. Or they're at least being redacted, right? So who do you think the Trump tweet team is?

#Patrick Henningsen

There's definitely more than one person, and they definitely have a little committee. I'd say that committee is probably very much on the same wavelength in terms of their thoughts and beliefs, and that would include Stephen Miller and people like that. In his first term, he had different people putting out tweets, and now he has his own platform called Truth Social, which, you know, at the moment... yeah, at the moment, he's using his social media account, in my opinion, just to mess with the markets. Because look at the announcement he made earlier on Monday this week—he said, "Yeah, I've got a meeting. We're going to have talks with the Iranians," and so forth.

Right away, you saw the S&P 500 jump to a market cap of two trillion. And then the Iranians came out a couple of hours later and denied it, saying, "We haven't spoken to Trump. What the hell are you talking about?" The market crashed back down again, losing a trillion in market cap. So if you're smart and you do your call options before the announcement, you can make a lot of money on the surge and then make money on the dip afterward. Then it rebounds a little bit again. So all this talk about retaking the Strait of Hormuz without a concrete plan makes me think, Pascal, that there was no plan.

And he's doing this either to shore up the oil markets—to bring a little more value back in—or to prevent the price from spiking too much. But there are also people making a lot of money off this on Wall Street. And I think there's insider trading going on. I think it's happening at the White House level. And when all is said and done—if we survive as a human race—we'll see some horrific insider trading using the markets between Trump's announcements and also Polymarket. These betting sites are just insane, the stuff that's going on.

#Pascal

I read the other day on social media that Congress made an exception for themselves when it comes to insider trading. Is that true? Can congressmen and senators do insider trading without any punishment being handed out?

#Patrick Henningsen

I think they do, but this is a different type of insider trading because it would be at the policy level and the executive level. Everyone knows that when Trump posts something on social media, there's going to be a reaction, and the market's going to move. Right now, the markets are so tense—especially with regard to oil prices and some of these commodities in the energy sector. Also, helium, AI, semiconductors, all of that stuff, even fertilizer and big ag—it's all affected by the Strait of Hormuz. So any announcement by Trump can totally create tremors in the market one way or the other. And if you know in advance what's happening and what's going to be said, you can ride that wave and make an ungodly sum of money if you're able to place the kinds of bets that people at Wall Street institutions can make. And I think this is happening.

#Pascal

Oh my God, you know, wouldn't it be even more insulting if, in the end, it turns out it's not about geostrategy, it's not about Israel—it's just about gambling on a global scale? Yeah. Anyhow, all of these things obviously come together. It's just difficult to say which factor influences which others. But Patrick, that was very, very interesting. Thank you very much for the insights you shared with us. For people who want to find your work, where's the best place to go?

#Patrick Henningsen

The main hub is 21stcenturywire.com. That's my website and our media platform. We've been going since 2009. I'm also a co-anchor on UK Column News, which is a really well-established UK alternative media outlet. I'm their anchor on Fridays. Plus, I have a show on Sunday called The Sunday Wire, which is kind of a weekly wrap-up of a lot of these stories as well. But yeah, 21stcenturywire.com—you'll find everything there. And I'm on Substack too, at patrickhenningson.substack.com. So, you know, we can drop those links in the description or whatever.

#Pascal

Yeah. If you send me the links in an email, I'll just copy and paste them into the description box of this video below. And we'll certainly have you back to talk again, Patrick Henningson. Thank you very much for your time today.

#Patrick Henningsen

My pleasure. Great to be with you, Pascal.