

Pepe Escobar: Iran's Silent Strategy: How It's Ending US Dominance

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Thursday, March 26, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Pepe Escobar, is here with us. Welcome back, Pepe.

#Pepe

Such a pleasure to be with you, Nima. Buddhist greetings from Southeast Asia to you and to our audience—yeah.

#Nima

Let's start, Pepe, with the current situation of the war—the conflict in the Middle East. It's a war that's escalating. And one of the main problems right now is what's happening in the Strait of Hormuz. One of the main reasons you hear in the United States is talk about an invasion of Iran, moving toward some islands close to the Strait of Hormuz. You've been there; you know the region.

#Pepe

Yes.

#Nima

And here's a clip of you flying over the Strait of Hormuz. Do you want me to play it now, or do you want to say something first?

#Pepe

Please, Nima, allow me 30 seconds to explain the context to you and to our audience. This was in May last year, when we were shooting our documentary on the North–South Transportation Corridor—Russia, Iran, India. The clip you're about to see was released only, what, two hours ago by Press TV. It shows me flying over the Strait of Hormuz. You'll see Hormuz Island down there, before we arrived at the port of Chabahar. Extremely important. It's so important that a few days ago it was bombed by the Americans.

So this clip gives you an idea of the Strait of Hormuz—20% of global oil transits through it—a bit of the geography, and our arrival in Chabahar, the big port in Sistan–Balochistan, quite close to the Iran–Pakistani border. Very important. And there’s obviously a lot of spin about the possibility of an American landing in Sistan–Balochistan, not far from Chabahar, which, if it were the case, would be an absolute suicidal mission. I don’t think it’s going to happen, but there are a lot of rumors about it in Pakistan, in the Gulf, and in Iran as well. But you can consider this absurd. We’ll talk about it later on. Thank you, Nima.

#Nima

Yeah, here’s the clip, Pepe.

#Pepe

The southern sky was bright—not with light, but with a hidden possibility. Down below, where the sea narrows and the paths of oil and politics merge, geography is no longer a map; it’s an equation. Every day, one-fifth of the world’s oil flows silently through this strait. But nothing here is truly silent. The winds from Oman carry the hum of tankers, and from above, I watched as power moved across the water. We were headed to Chabahar, a remote point now standing at the center of tomorrow’s game.

#Pepe

It’s a very short clip, of course. In the documentary—please, very simple—all of you, go to the Press TV website, presstv.ir. Click on “Documentaries,” it’s right there in front of you. It’s a one-hour documentary that explains everything about the corridor in detail. And obviously, you’ll see a lot about Bandar Abbas, the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, cargo movement, the port of Chabahar, and of course, how trade in the Persian Gulf and beyond works.

#Nima

Pepe, let me bring in a deeper question that you mentioned in your recent piece on Sputnik. In that article, you talk about the new world being born while the old one is busy dying. What’s your point? What are you trying to say in that piece?

#Pepe

Well, to start with a technical point—this is a direct reference to a line from one of Bob Dylan’s most important songs, where he says, “He’s not busy being born, he’s busy dying.” I adapted that idea to the new order and the old order. To quote Gramsci, the old order is not yet dead, but it’s dying fast, while the new one hasn’t been fully born yet, though it’s already taking shape as we speak. At the

center of this new order being born is the Strait of Hormuz. It's not by accident that a man who manages about 14 trillion dollars—the largest amount of funds in human history, and that's not an exaggeration—Larry Fink from BlackRock—is paying close attention to this region.

He gave an interview to the BBC where the breakdown was basically that there are only two outcomes. He was referring, without going into details, to the Strait of Hormuz—how it's going to operate from now on. So, his two outcomes: at the end—which is not really the end, more like the end of the beginning, not the beginning of the end—we're either going to have oil at \$40 a barrel, or we're going to have oil at \$150 a barrel. And if that happens, option number two, he said it bluntly, straight to the point—it's going to be a global recession. So where are we now? We're not heading toward option number one. We're moving fast toward option number two, because oil is now over \$100, and it's not coming down.

It's between 100 and 110. Depending on what happens this weekend, it could easily reach 120. Assuming there's this enormous, you know, so-called ground invasion with 4,000 marines—which is a joke in itself—well, the global recession has already started, by the way. So think, of course, because he's always hedging. Don't forget, this guy is managing fortunes that people can't even quantify, so he has to hedge. But he knows, deep inside—and he looked positively glum in this interview—that we're heading toward option number two: oil at 150 a barrel. And, of course, this is on top of what didn't happen during the week. We're talking on Thursday, right, Nima? You remember that on Monday the famous ultimatum was cut off by Neal Caligula himself, because he looked at the numbers and freaked out.

And the numbers were the price of oil and, of course, the numbers in the bond market. The bond market was going over 5%, back to 4.5%, and then back to 5%. He was freaking out because one of the few things he may know—or at least he has some idiots around him, like Lutnik, to tell him—is that at 5% on the 10-year yield of U.S. Treasury bonds, we cannot sustain anything. We cannot pay anything. We collapse. So we're getting there still, because the yield kept growing after people found out that his blah-blah-blah was fake. And this five-year postponement was essentially to buy time, to maybe engineer this project—whatever ground invasion they're planning. They have a few scenarios for a possible ground invasion, all of them cataclysmic for the invading forces. So this is where we are at the moment. And once again, everything on the whole planet now turns around what happens in the Strait of Hormuz.

#Nima

I think one of the immediate reactions from the Iranians would be not only an attack on the island they're trying to capture, trying to invade, but also on the UAE. We've seen how Ali Larijani, the Speaker of Parliament in Iran, said, "We have information that one of these Arab states is cooperating with the United States to invade Iran." And that could be totally devastating for them. What's your take on that?

#Pepe

It's my next column. I already started writing it, Nima. This one will probably be published tomorrow. I started writing about Pakistan as the mediator—the chosen mediator—if, of course, a meeting were to take place in Islamabad. That was the scenario at the beginning of the week. Okay, we were going to have maybe a meeting in Islamabad by the end of the week, and it would be between J.D. Vance and Ghalibaf. That lasted probably no more than a day, a day and a half at most, because the previous idea was they got rid of Mutt and Jeff—Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Dumb and Dumber—Witkoff and Kushner. These idiots couldn't even read the proposal, translated by very capable Omani diplomats. It was written in Farsi, the Omani diplomats translated it into English, handed it to Witkoff and Kushner, and these idiots couldn't even understand, Nima, what Iran was proposing—which was very, very generous.

Anyway, the Iranians might talk to J.D. Vance. And then, of course, Araqchi, Ghalibaf himself—everybody said, "We're not going to talk to anybody," because they know our list. We passed our list through the usual intermediaries, mostly Oman, Pakistan as well. And, of course, it's absolutely incompatible with the completely stupid 15-point plan by the Americans. So obviously, there's no possibility of any negotiation. The problem now is that after the whole thing collapsed, it's more or less certain that probably during this weekend there's going to be an attempt, at least, to establish a bridge. It won't be a ground invasion.

You cannot do a ground invasion with 4,000 Marines. That's a joke, even with all the air support they're going to get. Maybe they'll try to establish a bridgehead. And there are two—actually, I'd say three—major candidates. The number one candidate, the way I see it, is Little Larak Island. It's going to be very, very difficult. Why Larak Island? Because this is where the IRGC Navy, with binoculars, can visually and physically control the tankers that pay the toll to cross the Strait of Hormuz, and they navigate very close to this little island. It's to the right of Qeshm. Qeshm is much, much bigger—just to give you all an idea.

#Nima

Here is Larak.

#Pepe

Here is Larak. Excellent. So Qeshm is to the left. Qeshm is much, much bigger. Qeshm, to give you all an idea, is bigger than Okinawa.

#Nima

This one is Hormuz, which you mentioned at the beginning.

#Pepe

Because the footage you saw in the documentary—my plane took off from Bandar Abbas—we were flying over here, to the right of Hormuz Island. In fact, I flew between Hormuz, Larak, and Qeshm. Then he turned around, and we arrived in Chabahar over here.

#Nima

This is Qeshm.

#Pepe

This is Qeshm. Qeshm is absolutely impossible, just to give you all an idea. In the Second World War, Okinawa—it took, if I'm not mistaken, at least 12,000 American soldiers lost to take Okinawa. It took them three months, and they sent a lot of people. So multiply that by the size of Qeshm, and you see it's out of the question. At best, if they were the luckiest ever, with all the pantheons of gods available, they could establish a bridgehead in Larak. But Larak is extremely well protected. The U.S. and the IRGC Navy are there—it's heavily fortified, heavily protected, with batteries of missiles everywhere, etc. So this would be possibility number one. Qeshm—very hard. And the third one, which would be a diversionary tactic, is Karg. But Karg is very, very far away; it's way to the west of the Strait of Hormuz.

#Nima

Just to make it clear, let me go to the—yes, you can show Karg, exactly.

#Pepe

Yeah, it's still further west. Karg is here—exactly, right here. It's extremely far away from...

#Nima

It's here, and you have to go—it's just impossible. They don't want to. No, they don't.

#Pepe

And if, for instance, they land in Kuwait and try to cross to Karg—wow! They're going to be sitting ducks for batteries of this. Completely absurd. It's not going to work.

#Nima

It's almost impossible, you know, going in that direction. You're right.

#Pepe

So tell me, do you agree that Larak is probably the number one target at the moment?

#Nima

It could be, but I'm literally thinking about this island here—the old Qeshm, you know, here.

#Pepe

Okay, okay.

#Nima

They may be closer to Qeshm Island, and then they're closer to—well, I think this island could be one of them.

#Pepe

But they still have to go to Qeshm, and Qeshm is very well protected. It still doesn't make sense. Yeah.

#Nima

And they're not going to achieve anything if they go there, Pepe, because it's not just about going there—it's about sustaining the situation, you know, fighting back.

#Pepe

And coming back to the other key point you just mentioned—the role of the UAE—this is extremely serious. Because now we know that not only the IRGC, but also the best strategic analysts in Tehran, are reviewing everything the UAE did even before the war, what they've done these past three weeks, and the conclusion is practically inevitable. They're already part of the war, side by side with the U.S. and Israel. So there will be a counterpunch. For the moment, Iran has been very discreet. They've only hit a few selective targets in the UAE—in Dubai, Tripoli, the port, hotels where American troops were staying. But now it's a completely different story.

So if the UAE—if there's this attempt at, let's say, a beachhead, not a ground invasion—and it's confirmed that the UAE is part of it, MBZ better be ready, because Iran could turn his bling-bling money-laundering machine into a parking lot, easily, if they want to. So the Dubai model, as we know it, is already dead. But then we're going to get to the Abu Dhabi energy export model, and the artificial intelligence that the Emirates provide to Israel and to the U.S. Then it's going to be all-out war—Iran and the UAE. This is extremely serious. And everybody already knows that the UAE is part

of it. So now, from Iran's side, the next step is to formalize that: you are hostile, you are an enemy nation, you are attacking the Islamic Republic, and you're going to have to pay the price.

So all that is part of, once again, everything revolving around the Strait of Hormuz. Qatar and Oman have been very, very clever. They're the only ones among the GCC who disassociated themselves from the war and from being on the side of the West and Israel. So, for all practical purposes, Oman and Qatar are neutral from now on—and Iran recognizes that. But the other GCC states, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, that's a completely different story. We know there was a document released by five of the GCC members—without Oman—plus Jordan, with the little king, condemning Iran, which is basically a way of saying, "Look, we're siding with the absent syndicate." That's how it was read in Tehran, obviously. So I'd say both sides now are pretty clear on who's on which side, and who decided to get out of it—Oman and Qatar.

#Nima

Pepe, what we've learned from the Iranian foreign minister is that the United States is sending messages through different mediators—basically Oman, Pakistan, and even Turkey. But that doesn't mean Iran is negotiating with the United States. They're just sending proposals, some ideas, suggestions on how to proceed. But in the end, Iran hasn't changed its position: to end the war and demand compensation for the destruction. That's one of the crucial points in the Iranian argument right now.

If the United States accepts the compensation for the destruction, it means the United States is admitting blame for this war—they'd be accepting it themselves. And how do you see that happening with Donald Trump? The guy is constantly bragging about attacking even the mainstream media in the U.S. when they're not in line with him. He says they're making up lies and all that. But do you really see him going that far? I don't. That's why the war would just go on and on.

#Pepe

Absolutely. What I described as the infernal escalation machine will keep going. And this was already obvious at the beginning of the week, regardless of the ultimatum to start destroying the running electric grid—whether that went on or was canceled practically at the last minute. Regardless, the machine of escalation is there because the positions on both sides are absolutely incompatible on every issue. Except maybe—well, assuming that the United States would negotiate in good faith, which they never do. And obviously, no one in a position of power in Iran can possibly negotiate with the U.S. after what happened in the last two instances. So there's no possible negotiation.

It's the confirmation, once again paid with blood, of what our friend, the Grand Master Sergei Lavrov, has been saying for over two years: the United States is non-agreement-capable. And more than that—non-negotiation-capable and non-diplomacy-capable. This regime in the U.S. right now has proven that over and over again. It's the bombing regime by definition. That's it—their

diplomacy is bombing. So that poses an enormous problem for Iran to even consider any negotiations. It's true, there are a lot of back channels. At the moment, let's say Qatar is in the background, and Oman is always there—Oman was there and continues to be there. But there are three additional back channels now.

Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan. And the case of Pakistan is extremely complicated. I started writing my column and then turned it around because of the UAE. But after a conversation today, deep in the middle of the night, I'll be arranging all these elements. Because Pakistan sees this as a golden, platinum opportunity to pose as a mediator. They have good relations with both sides. They have good relations with Iran—not spectacular, but good—and they're neighbors. And the guy who's actually in charge in Pakistan, the army chief, the horrible Munir, has Trump on speed dial, Nima. He can pick up the phone, call the White House, and Trump will talk to him right away.

Don't forget, this general is one of the leaders of the putsch regime-change operation who got rid of Imran Khan and put him in jail. So this is an extremely ghastly regime—hedging, of course. But they can capitalize on the fact that they can talk to everybody. The other people in the GCC have very good relations with Pakistan. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have, for all practical purposes, a military pact. There are zillions of Pakistanis working in the Gulf and sending remittances to their families all across Pakistan. So this is an important element. It means you have a lot of Pakistanis living all over the Gulf. So, of course, they have a little bit of leverage to pose as mediators. But can you trust them? Of course not. If I was...

#Nima

If it were Imran Khan, I think things would be different from the current situation. Imran Khan is different.

#Pepe

Imran Khan evolved over the years and became not only good at diplomacy but also a very capable political leader. That's a completely different story. These people are extremely dangerous. And don't forget, they depend on the military-industrial complex. The relationship between the Pakistani military and the Pentagon has always been very, very close. So basically, they're an extension of the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex. Can you trust them to be impartial, neutral mediators? Obviously not. But they positioned themselves to the point where they were getting privileged information from Iran and passing it to—guess who? Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Whitcomb and Kushner—who would then relay it to Trump. So... General Munir—wow. Wow. It's complicated.

But at the moment, apparently this whole thing disappeared in maybe 48 hours, because now the only talk is about the so-called ground invasion. So there's no diplomacy anymore. We're back to where we were—the infernal escalation machine. And if that happens and the UAE is involved, it means the war will move to another, even more complicated dimension. It will certainly imply, I

would say, the formal entry into the war by the Houthis in Yemen, because they will join the fight, close the Bab al-Mandab, and cause serious trouble for Saudi exports through the Red Sea. There's no question about that. We're on the brink of all these things happening at the same time. So we could reach a scenario next week, or even sooner, where things are even darker than they already are.

#Nima

Pepe, many people don't know much about Iran's ground forces. They're the strongest part of the army and the IRGC. The United States would face something they've never experienced before, I think, if they went there.

#Pepe

Talk about that a little bit, Nima. Explain it to our audience a bit, if you can.

#Nima

Because they have, right now, more than one million soldiers ready to fight—ready to fight on the ground. And they're so... Pepe, I did my military service in the Navy, in the northern part of Iran, in Anzali, in Bandar Anzali. Bandar Anzali too.

#Pepe

Which, by the way, was bombed a few days ago. You saw that, right?

#Nima

Yeah, yeah. The ground forces of Iran are really unbelievable. They're so well equipped, so ready—so, you know, in every sense you can imagine. That's why I don't really see the United States having a good option going in that direction. That's a problem, a big problem. They're going to be slaughtered. Nobody wants to see that. And Donald Trump could go down. This is a swamp for Donald Trump, a trap. The more he struggles, Pepe, the deeper he sinks, in my opinion, if he goes ahead with a ground invasion of Iran.

#Pepe

But he's not being fed correct information, Nima. Now it's already leaked that it's basically two or three-minute videos every day—five minutes at most—a collage of images showing successes, bombings, and so on. So obviously he doesn't read. He's incapable of contextualizing. He can't see nuance. He behaves like a two-year-old—not a four-year-old, a two-year-old. And obviously all the sycophants around him, who are immensely mediocre, that's it: "Ah, we cannot enrage the boss."

That's what he gets every day. So no wonder he doesn't have access to qualified information. And even if some people have qualified information—CIA, Pentagon, etc.—they're not admitted into the Oval Circle, the Oval Office.

#Nima

What's happening right now in the minds of, you know, the main decision-makers in Iran comes down to two options: one, negotiating with the United States, and the other, deciding everything on the battlefield. And from what I've seen so far, more than 99 percent are leaning toward fighting, because no one sees any kind of positive outcome through negotiations with the Americans. It's all about deception, you know, creating fake positions—and then the attacks on Iran again and again, the assassinations of leaders, of commanders. Nothing changes. That's why, Pepe, what's happening now has been building for such a long time—more than 20 years. The right wing of the government, the conservatives, have been arguing: why are we letting these people use this trade against us?

#Pepe

For more than 20 years—and that's what's happening right now.

#Nima

Most of these liberals—well, neoliberals—in Iran are laughing at them. These people are crazy. They don't know, they don't understand the reality. But this is the reality of what's going on right now. That's why those people are the main decision-makers. Because after all, you know what the United States and Israel have done so far: they've assassinated all the people who were somehow keen, somehow eager to talk to someone, to make some sort of democratic outcome or some kind of bridge between Iran and the West. But they've assassinated all of them.

#Pepe

Exactly. Apart from Araghchi and Qalibaf. And now we know the story—that they were spared. They were on the list to be killed, and there was an intervention: "No, we need somebody to talk to. Otherwise, are they going to talk to IRGC generals?" No. IRGC generals, they send Mr. Khorramshahr with a business card straight to your place. Araghchi and Qalibaf, at least—Araghchi experienced face-to-face the treachery of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, incapable of reading a report written in plain English. And Qalibaf, of course, Qalibaf is on another level. He's a much more hardcore character—very well prepared, with a military background, fighter pilot, you name it—but he also understands diplomacy. After all, he's in the Majlis. In the Majlis, you have to be extremely diplomatic. That's it. And everybody else is a military commander.

#Nima

Ninety-nine percent of the people in power right now were involved in the Iran–Iraq War. They know what war is.

#Pepe

They know what real war means. These idiots in Washington—they don't know what a war is, even on Wall Street. Can you imagine a real war, with trenches and bombs?

#Nima

They have no idea. You know, the guy who was the IRGC commander, General Mohsen Rezaei—when he was head of the IRGC during the Iran–Iraq War, he was 24 years old. The thing is, these people don't understand—killing commanders isn't going to change anything.

#Pepe

No. And on top of that, you have layers—and the people in the second, third, fourth layers, they're almost as competent as the leaders. Absolutely. What do you think of the new secretary of the Security Council? He seems to be much more hardcore than Larijani.

#Nima

Much, much more. I think it's not even comparable.

#Pepe

Not even comparable.

#Nima

He knows how to fight. He knows how to... He's not that much—after all, he studied economics at the university. He understands, you know, the economic side of what's going on. But still, he's far, far to the right. And he's one of those people who, when it came to the Strait of Hormuz, said it should be closed. And that's what's happening right now. It was even under his, you know, command—it was under Larijani's command. You have to think about how things are changing, you know. And you know, Pepe, the other part of the war is the psychological war in Iran. They were completely defeated in Iran. That's why they're not talking about regime change anymore.

People from the right, from the left, from the middle—all of them, all young, all together—they're ready to fight against the United States. And they see this as the destiny of the Iranian people. They have prevailed. Iranian history isn't just a couple of hundred years; it goes back thousands of years. They've dealt with these kinds of invasions before. They know how to handle that. They have all this history behind them, and they have all the means. That's why, Pepe, I think the basic question right

now is: why is the president of the United States begging for negotiations if they're winning? He said, "I'm winning. I destroyed everything—no army, no navy, no air defense system, nothing left." So what? Why are you begging for a ceasefire if that's the case?

#Pepe

Exactly. Well, we're not dealing with—once again—we're dealing with a grown-up, an old man, theoretically grown-up, but psychologically a two-year-old, four-year-old max. Totally megalomaniac, a narcissist unbounded, incomparable in terms of narcissism, which he uses, of course, as a cover—as his shield against his own mediocrities and incapacities. The fact is that he's essentially a coward, that he doesn't display any empathy toward anybody or anything, that the whole planet revolves around him. And now, in a position of power as president of the United States, it's very, very easy to believe that the world revolves around you. This happened with previous American presidents, but not to this level.

He's mentally unprepared to be, you know, to take care of a high school—which is already too much. Can you imagine the so-called invincible or indispensable nation? So that's extremely complicated. And it's very easy to manipulate him, Nima. The best example is if you feed him selected information—that's the only thing he'll absorb, because he doesn't have the intellectual curiosity to look elsewhere, or even to look at his gigantic, voluminous intel reports that are on his table every day. He doesn't even open them. So it's very easy—very, very easy—to manipulate him. And in the case of the genocidal, the war criminal in Tel Aviv, who went to the U.S. seven times in the past year, year and a half or so...

He's always in D.C. It's very, very easy to manipulate him. And he's wily. He may be a war criminal, but he's very, very clever. So he turns Trump around—it's very, very easy. And on top of that, he's surrounded by mediocrities like, you know, the Secretary of Energy, right? Lutnick, who's from Cantor Fitzgerald, basically a financial grifter. The absolutely ghastly son-in-law, Kushner—we can call him the silent gangster in the whole mafia enterprise. Extremely dangerous. Not very bright, but brutal as hell. The bright one in the couple is Ivanka, and I had confirmation from people who know them closely. They said, "Look, Ivanka is the brains. He's an absolute asshole. But he can talk directly to Trump anytime, and Trump listens to him."

Very, very dangerous. It's so easy to manipulate him. As much as Obama was a disaster, at least Obama, intellectually, was not a total idiot. He read, he listened to people. Okay, decision-making is another story. But intellectually, you can't compare the two. At least you had a president who was capable of enunciating a thought, stringing sentences together, developing a cogent argument—actually debating, which is something he did when he was in university. So this is essential.

The psychological profile of this character is essential because now, with his ultimate decision—though the decision may have been taken for him by higher powers, we know who they are, the usual suspects: the donors, the super financiers, the Zionist international axis, you name it—it was

their decision. But they found the perfect messenger, and that's why we are in these dark, dark times, you know, the dark clouds enveloping the whole planet, in fact. He didn't have the intellectual discernment or the capacity to analyze the consequences of something like this. It's crazy, because even people who are functionaries of the system—inside the CIA, for instance, or who worked with the CIA—can't see it. And now some of them, at least, are coming out and saying, no, the whole thing was completely absurd from the beginning.

So this proves once again that he's impermeable to self-analysis, to start with, and to critical thinking. If you don't read, if you think you're the king of the world, if you're an unbounded Narcissus, you know, of course it's impossible. You blind yourself. You're deaf and dumb and blind to reality. And that explains Nima: "Every day we are winning, we are tired of winning, we destroyed everything." That's it. This is the subtext of this blah, blah, blah every day. It's that. Because he only has the set of information that conforms to his own prejudices. This is the short version. It's much more complicated. People write books about serial killers—this would warrant a book about an extreme narcissistic personality who happens to have virtually unlimited power. How dangerous that is. Well, we are all living under this cloud right now.

#Nima

Pepe, it seems that the whole concept of this war is based on Israel—on the security of Israel and what the outcome would be for Israel. I would say two important things have happened so far. One of them was the Iranian ballistic, hypersonic missile hitting Dimona. That one was a total game changer.

#Pepe

This is a psychological shock—not only for Israel, but for everyone. Exactly. Yes, go ahead, please.

#Nima

The second one is how Hezbollah is capable of hitting the central and southern parts of Israel.

#Pepe

Nima, remember we talked about this a lot, and we kept reminding our audience that Hezbollah is restructuring. It's going to take some time; it's a very complicated process. This is what I heard in Lebanon last year when I went to the funeral of Sheikh Nasrallah and spoke with Hezbollah political leaders. They said, yes, it's complicated. There was this decapitation, but our second, third, and fourth levels are very, very good. They're young and well prepared. It's going to take time, but we're already doing it. That was last year. This year, we're already seeing the results. This is the second, third, and fourth generation now in command in Hezbollah.

They're killing Merkavas. Now it's a sport—"Okay, how many Merkavas are we going to destroy today? Easy. Let's go." That's it. It takes a while to restructure a military environment, and Hezbollah is complicated because they have their social wing, which is extremely active. They have to provide at least some relief to entire neighborhoods in the south of Beirut and villages all across southern Lebanon. And on top of that, at the same time, they have to reorganize their military machine. It's immensely impressive. You can only do this with cadres at the highest level—well-educated, alert, dynamic, creative, and as forceful as the previous generation.

And of course, they learn from the previous generation. In Iran, we're witnessing the same process. The people who are now, let's say, probably in the second layer replacing all the leaders who were assassinated—they're keeping it up. And of course, the drive is strong, because they saw what happened to their mentors. All of that is subordinated to a higher purpose. And when I say "higher," I mean not only in geopolitical terms, but in spiritual, ethical, and moral terms. And with the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei, even more so—they're fighting for his memory, his legacy, the continuation of an idea. It's extremely important.

So I've always immensely admired my Iranian friends, Nima Alkhorshid, who are experts in Shiite theology and Western philosophy. There are very few places in the world where you find this mix. You know, they can have a full discourse on the intrinsic meaning of velayat-e faqih, and then they jump to talk about Empedocles and Aristotle. It's brilliant—absolutely brilliant. When the Americans can't string together maybe even one sentence, can you imagine two? Which is the case with the push-up clown, the secretary of forever wars. There you go. It's an intellectual war—a war of intellect against supreme stupidity. No question. Demonstrated individually by people in positions of power.

#Nima

Just imagine you're Donald Trump coming to power and seeing that Assad is gone, the head of Hezbollah assassinated, commanders in Iran killed. You think the acts of resistance are somehow disappearing from the scene—so, "Let's go after Iran right now." This started with Yemen, remember? He started with Yemen. He tried to destroy Yemen before going after Iran, but that was an unsuccessful mission on his part. Still, he somehow felt that because of these fake riots in Iran, the people were going to do that for him.

The case that I think was so misleading for Donald Trump was Venezuela. He thought he could manage something like that in Iran—that it would be the end of the acts of resistance. But what he's ended up with now, Pepe, is a strong Iran from within—not only militarily, but internally. There's a new Hezbollah in Iraq, which is very powerful. They're ready to become, I'd say, the next face of the Iraqi government. They're going to take power in the near future. They're the ones deciding everything in Iraq right now.

#Pepe

They're very capable.

#Nima

Yemen hasn't joined so far.

#Pepe

Yemen, exactly—capable, cultured, very well educated. They have excellent universities in Yemen. They learn everything. They have their own industrial and military complex—everything. And in Iraq, wow. I met Hashd al-Shaabi years ago in Baghdad, and I was extremely impressed. When I met them, Mohandes was still, let's say, Secretary General, maybe the number two. This was before he was assassinated with General Soleimani. He spent one afternoon with us, Nima, in a safe house inside the Green Zone. You need guts to do something like that. I remember the Green Zone during the Iraq war, you know.

And obviously, I never entered because I refused to go to the Green Zone. Whenever I wanted to interview somebody, we used to meet in the Red Zone—sometimes even in front of the gates. You know, when I was interviewing someone from parliament, I'd say, "Okay, meet me at the gate," or somewhere outside. So, Hashd al-Shaabi—it's fantastic. They took us to their own safe house inside the Green Zone, maybe a five-minute walk from the American embassy. Only if you have balls of mega steel can you do something like that. And they are perfectly capable—all of them, extremely capable.

And it's a good sign that this Iraqi government—it's a complicated arrangement. We met the current prime minister. I was there, what, two years ago or so. At least the militias, officially, have the right to defend themselves. It's not that Baghdad is openly endorsing what they're doing, but at least, okay, you have the right to defend yourselves and defend attacks on the Republic of Iraq. Excellent. So they can go on. And de facto, they've already expelled the Americans. The Americans and NATO are, for all practical purposes, out of Iraq. The problem is—and this is a larger-than-life problem.

#Nima

There's no Green Zone anymore.

#Pepe

No, the money—the money is not in Iraq. The money is in the bloody Federal Reserve in New York. So the Iraqis can't even use the money from their oil exports because it's automatically confiscated by the Americans. So how are you going to turn this around? And it's true, as you mentioned—it's true. There's no more Green Zone, in fact. Yes, the Green Zone is still there, but it's essentially offices of the Iraqi administration, the Baghdad administration. There's one five-star hotel where

foreign guests usually stay. The American embassy, which is a gigantic monster—we don't know what's going to happen to it. It will continue to be attacked, there's no question about that. But the symbolism of the Green Zone is gone. This is over. It's dead—twenty-three years after Shock and Awe. It's something many of us never thought we'd see. Well, twenty-three years in historical terms is not much. They did it. They did it in the end.

#Nima

And what's happening in Iraq doesn't stay in Iraq. In my opinion, it's going to spread to Kuwait.

#Pepe

Kuwait, absolutely. You know what would be the ultimate poetic justice, Nima? Eventually—after, I wouldn't say now, but maybe, assuming this war ends and a few months go by—Kuwait could be reabsorbed by Iraq. Because don't forget, Kuwait is part of Iraq. It was part of the province of Basra. So for all practical purposes, Kuwait is Iraq. Saddam Hussein was right when he said that at the time. So this would be the ultimate poetic justice, if it happens—historical poetic justice.

#Nima

And it's not going to be an invasion. It's going to be a grassroots, you know, sort of movement in Kuwait—joining the Iraqi resistance, in my opinion.

#Pepe

Exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because history comes up with stuff that is—

#Nima

Exactly.

#Pepe

It can be mind-boggling, right?

#Nima

I think the future is so different, and I don't see Donald Trump being capable of changing anything in West Asia, because the history—the scale of what's going on—is so huge that the Trump administration doesn't really matter. I think there's some sort of recognition on the part of the Europeans; that's why they're not getting that much involved in the Strait of Hormuz. They understand what's going on. You know, it's a long history for the British Empire in the Suez Canal.

#Pepe

And they're not going to... Can you imagine if you have 1956—the Suez Crisis was the de facto end of the British Empire—and then 2026, the Strait of Hormuz, the beginning of the end of the American Empire? That would be another outstanding historical poetic justice, you know, if it happens.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. Muito obrigado, Pepe. Obrigado a você.

#Pepe

What a pleasure. It was great to talk to you. The next few days are going to be very, very heavy. Exactly—so heavy, yeah. Everything could be turned upside down.

#Nima

And we all know that Donald Trump wants to end the conflict before going to China.

#Pepe

By the way, don't forget that now we have a date, Nima. He's going to China on May 14. So why did they already choose a date? Because, in his own calculations, the war might be over by then—he needs to go to China in a, you know, Trump-manufactured position of force. But what if he goes to China as a loser? Don't forget that. Once again, it's like thinking about the future: oil at 40 a barrel or oil at 150 a barrel—same thing in the script to China. Position of force or total loser? Yeah.

#Nima

Exactly.

#Pepe

Até mais. Take care. And to all of you, our audience—em português, para todos vocês—a luta continua. The struggle goes on.

#Nima

It's going to stay that way. Bye.