

Pepe Escobar: Iran Just CHANGED the Balance of Power in the Middle East

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Thursday, April 2nd, 2026. And our dear friend, our brother, Pepe Escobar, is here with us. Welcome back, Pepe.

#Pepe

Yeah, well, welcome, Nima. Greetings from Buddhist Southeast Asia. I'm very, very depressed today, so I already beg forgiveness from all of you if I explode. I spent most of the day exploding in rage, considering what's going on, and considering that now this is a war against over 90 million Iranian people. It's a war against them. It has nothing to do with all that bullshit coming from that *filho da puta* barbarian. No, it's worse. Now it's a war of revenge—blind revenge, impotence, rage against the whole Iranian population. And if that doesn't make your blood boil, I'm sorry, but you're not human.

#Nima

Sefi, let's start with the fact that we finally had Donald Trump speaking yesterday. He addressed the American people at 9 p.m. about the war—his update on the war—which really wasn't anything new compared to what he'd said before. But here's what he said regarding that line of attacks, you know, targeting civilians and infrastructure in Iran. Here's what he said.

#Speaker 03

Mm-hmm. During this period, no deal has been made. We have our eyes on key targets. If there's no deal, we're going to hit each and every one of their electric generating plants very hard, and probably simultaneously. We haven't hit their oil, even though that's the easiest target of all, because that would leave them no chance of survival or rebuilding. But we could hit it, and it would be gone—and there's nothing they could do about it. They have no anti-aircraft equipment; their radar is completely annihilated. We are unstoppable as a military force. The nuclear sites we obliterated with the B-2 bombers were hit so hard it would take months to get near the nuclear dust. And we have them under intense satellite surveillance and control. If we see them make a move—any move—we'll hit them with missiles very hard again. We have all the cards; they have none. It's very important that we keep this conflict in perspective.

#Nima

Yeah, I can confirm that everything he said is a hundred percent lie.

#Pepe

Yeah, these are monsters. It's one monster lie after another. Well, by now, I'd say even the grains of dust in the Sahara Desert know that this kind of information is being fed to him—especially by the three stooges, those absolutely disgusting inhuman beings: the Secretary of Forever Wars, Jared Kushner, and Witkoff. These are the people feeding him these lies that he repeats, because obviously he doesn't read anything. He doesn't fact-check anything. And obviously, if you're around him, you have to kiss his ass; otherwise, you lose your job. But worse than all that, Nima, is the line that's been going all over the world, the one that actually formalized—already indicts him as a war criminal.

The only place left for the baboon of barbaria is a war crimes tribunal, where he's going to be condemned and preferably exiled to a high-security prison with forced labor for the rest of his miserable days. He says he's going to bomb Iran back to the Stone Ages. He couldn't even pronounce it correctly—he said "to the Stone Ages" instead of "to the Stone Age." Well, to be very lenient and diplomatic, we can say that when his ancestors were still trying to make fire, they were real barbarians. Iranians were already an extremely civilized empire. So that's where it starts, to put in context who the real barbarians are, right? But the most worrying development—and obviously this was not condemned by the UN, not condemned by anybody, not condemned by the West—

You have the President of the United States basically characterizing himself as a war criminal on live TV for the whole planet—and nothing happens. Well, at least it's all clear now what these people are. Not only him, but the people who are advising him, and especially the ones who keep him on a leash because of the compromise they have on him. That's one of the reasons why he needs to keep going with this madness. He says another four weeks, but it could be even more. And what's going to happen in these next four weeks? They're going to bomb the infrastructure of Iran to rubble—everywhere.

It already is, and it's going to get even more horrible. There are no limits. They're bombing pharmaceutical plants. They're bombing like they bombed bridges, including the B1 Bridge from Tehran to Karachi. It's a beautiful bridge—it was inaugurated not long ago. It's the highest bridge in all of West Asia. It's essential because this highway connection, Tehran–Karaj, is one of the most important in Iran, as you know, Nima. They even bombed the Institut Pasteur. I've been to a few Institut Pasteurs around the world—they're essential as health centers, vaccination centers, and scientific research centers.

This one in Iran, if I'm not mistaken, dates back to the 1920s. And that's it. They're bombing again—I just saw five minutes ago—they're bombing, once again, civilian neighborhoods in Tehran, and across Isfahan as well. So this is what they're going to do. It's out of impotence, out of blind rage. It'

s envy, because they're a bunch of piece-of-shit, uncultured barbarians. And that's their revenge against Tehran. If you are a sovereign, resistant civilization—nation, civilization-state—like Iran is, for them it's the absolute opposite of everything they preach about and claim to stand for.

No, they're worse than barbarians—so-called barbarians. And I'm a big fan of nomad empires, which used to be labeled by the settled empires as barbarians, including the Roman Empire, the Persian Empire. They called non-settled peoples barbarians, but they had many redeeming qualities, including artistic ones—like the Scythians, for instance. These people, they have absolutely nothing. The only thing they have is powerful bombs. And obviously, out of their impotence—and now that the ruling classes of the Empire of Chaos are seeing the whole scam they built after 1945 collapsing in front of their eyes—we can barely imagine how resentful they are. But we can understand where this rage is coming from. There's not going to be any more free lunch for them.

And it takes one resistant, sovereign nation to collapse the whole house of cards. But I'm very, very depressed by what awaits the people in Iran—and Iran itself—in the next few weeks. It's going to be horrible. It's going to be horrible. It's the only thing they have left, Nima. There's nothing. They lost all the military bases. They lost most of their assets everywhere. They have troops living in hotels. They lost control of the Strait of Hormuz. They're losing control of the petrodollar. Soon they're going to lose most of those stupid Gulf petro-monarchies. Two of them are already cooperating with Iran—Oman and Qatar. Sooner or later, the others will have to do something. Otherwise, they're going to disappear. They're going to become a mere footnote, not even a side note, in history—especially the Emirates.

Especially the Emirates, which, for all practical purposes, are already at war with Iran. So whatever they say, it doesn't matter—they are at war. They're facilitating attacks by the Americans. There are lots of U.S. military personnel, especially around Dubai. So get ready. They're not going to last long if it goes on like this. And the Iranians—they know everything that's happening everywhere, and they're taking notes. They have names, they have locations, they have satellite information—you name it. And Saudi Arabia is the big joker in the pack. We still don't know which way they're leaning. Things changed since the "kiss my ass" remark from the baboon of Barbaria—MBS, with his ego. Wow, he's planning a long-term revenge.

And it will be very painful for the Americans. It's already started. He's already said he's not buying weapons from the U.S. anymore. So we can assume they're going to start buying from Russia sooner or later. By the way, if I'm not mistaken, there's a phone call today, Nima—Putin and MBS. I wonder what they're going to talk about. This is going to be fun. There'll be no leaks, but it's going to be fun. So this is changing. What we have left is Bahrain. Bahrain is going to collapse. That monarchy is going to disappear. Kuwait, sooner or later—like our Iraqi friends are already theorizing—will probably be annexed back to the governorate of Basra, which it was before, of course. So we have the Saudi Arabia joker. This is going to be quite something to follow.

#Nima

I think it's important, Pepe, what's going on with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. You can see some sort of fracture, a difference between the two states. They had it before, back when things were happening in Yemen—they were somehow fighting each other. And right now, as time goes by and the reality of war sets in, the truth is coming to the surface. You see, these phone calls have meaning. We have to understand why they need to call Vladimir Putin. They did it before, and now he's doing it again. Because, after all, let's assume Donald Trump was talking about selling F-35s to Saudi Arabia.

#Nima

What does that mean for Saudi Arabia? Nothing.

#Pepe

Nothing. Nothing. So, yes. And this whole thing changed radically. The week isn't even over, but everything really shifted during this week, starting with that quad in Islamabad. Very important to remind all of you—it was not a Sunni axis. That's nonsense. People who are saying that have no idea what they're talking about. It was four Muslim nations that got together—beyond the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, beyond the GCC, beyond any other multilateral Islamic or Muslim framework—with Pakistan more or less as the coordinator. So: Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Theoretically, they were discussing what they could propose as a sort of, let's say, a quiet approximation between Washington and Tehran. So they went to Islamabad.

They have this blah, blah, blah. Everybody's smiling. Smiling about what? The photos are pathetic. You have these four stooges smiling like they're at a country club. Okay. So obviously they didn't come up with anything solid. This explains why the foreign minister of Pakistan had to hop on a plane the next morning, go to Beijing to talk to the people who really count—the Chinese. So he went there to meet Wang Yi. Right. This was obviously discussed before. The Chinese, of course, because they have a close relationship with Pakistan—the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, etc.—said, "Okay, you go there, you discuss, but as soon as you finish, you come here to tell us if you arrived at something." Obviously, the Chinese knew you would arrive at nothing.

But—and that's the major "but"—after Dar meets with Wang Yi, they release a five-point joint statement. And when you read that statement—I read it at least three times—I thought, are they really saying that? Because it's just a collection of clichés. Like, you know, if they believe that the United Nations Security Council or the UN Charter will be respected when the U.S. can veto anything, it's completely absurd. So this was not... I interpret it as a Chinese diversion tactic to appease everybody. But the real discussions are going to be between China, Russia, and Iran, in the background—not with these four. So, you know, Pakistan had a momentary protagonist role in setting up this meeting in Islamabad.

Now nobody's talking about Pakistan anymore, because the whole thing collapsed during the week already—even before the Stone Age rambling, blah, blah, blah, by the baboon of barbaria. But that lasted maybe two days, maximum. Everybody knows that what really matters will be discussed by the new Primakov Triangle—RIC: Russia, Iran, China. And of course, the Chinese are not going to play their game in public; this is going to be very discreet. Another reason why the Chinese could not possibly endorse anything that was discussed by the four Muslims is: how can the Chinese possibly be the guarantor of a so-called peace plan and take the risk of being the guarantor when they know who they're dealing with on the other side?

#Pepe

Remember, Lavrov, the United States is non-agreement-capable. That's even more true now than before—first applied to Ukraine, now to Iran, same thing. So the Chinese will never risk their diplomatic reputation. That's why the conversations that really matter are happening between the RIC, the new Primakov Triangle—Russia, Iran, and China. And we'll only know the outcome at the last minute. And just to finish this stretch, Nima, yesterday the Iranian ambassador in Moscow gave an interview to TASS, and he reiterated the same Iranian points from the beginning, now reduced to four. They used to be nine, then five. But the four main ones—everybody knows them: end of the war, end of their new sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, and guarantees that they won't be attacked again.

This means guarantees at the level of the UN Security Council. It doesn't matter much because the Americans break any guarantees. But there are going to be guarantees that the whole planet can see—it's a document out there. And if the Americans break it, it's proven that they broke it. And, of course, the nuclear program—the civilian nuclear program—continues. Everybody knows this. So when you compare these four points with the China-Pakistan five points, there's a lot of discrepancy. The only rational explanation is that the Chinese didn't want to compromise themselves with anything, knowing they cannot trust many—actually, I'd say most—of these other Muslim nations. Pakistan, maybe, because they have a closer relationship. But they cannot trust Turkey. They cannot trust Egypt, even though Egypt is a BRICS member.

But Egypt—basically, their government is aligned with the Zionists. And Saudi Arabia, once again, the wild card, the joker. Nobody knows where Saudi Arabia is going next. So this whole thing, Nima, it's amazing—it lasted less than three days. After three days, the whole thing collapsed, and the new narrative was: Trump is going to announce a land invasion, or he's going to announce that he's bringing the troops home. A lot of very well-informed American analysts were saying beforehand that he was going to announce he's bringing the troops home, because he's looking at the numbers—his popularity numbers plunging into a dark abyss. He's looking at the bond market, he's looking at the oil market, he's looking at the S&P 500. In the end, this is what we saw.

We saw an unhinged psycho killer basically saying they want to destroy a nation of 90 million people. What kind of de-escalation is that? This is even worse than a land invasion. Any land

invasion, as we all know, Nima, is doomed to failure—beyond failure. But this is worse. This is a deliberate bombing of the infrastructure of an entire state, with no discrimination. The way he framed it—obviously, his English is that of a three-year-old at best—but the way he read it, off his own teleprompter, was that this is an extermination, a decapitation campaign against the whole population of Iran. And that's why it's so serious. And it doesn't... I'm not surprised by the fact that there isn't a single repudiation coming from the so-called international community.

#Speaker 03

Nothing.

#Pepe

Nobody's saying anything.

#Nima

Pepe, I think you're right about that...

#Pepe

Sorry if I ask you this, but I'd like to ask you a question. Did you interpret his speech the same way?

#Nima

Yeah, I did. I did. I really think he's going to attack everything in Iran—hospitals, pharmaceutical plants, schools, universities, you know, everything: highways, everything. He wants to destroy everything before leaving the Middle East. That's the plan on his part because, from a strategic point of view, the whole operation was a total failure. He couldn't do anything militarily to defeat Iran, either militarily or strategically. That's why he's attacking civilians—because he wants to bring pain to the society. He wants to throw the Iranian economy into turmoil, with problems popping up all over Iran. This is what he's planning, because he couldn't do it militarily, couldn't defeat Iran strategically.

But the repercussions of what he's going to do, and what he's done so far, are so grave for the whole region. It's unbelievable. I think it's important to consider how that would influence the entire region—not only the Arab states, but Israel as well. Is Israel going to survive that? I think, as time goes by, maybe two to four weeks from now, Iran is going to hit Israel in a way they've never experienced before. They're going to hit something—everything, really—if the United States continues on this path. I don't know how that's going to play out for Donald Trump. How do you see the pressure on Israel? How do you see the way Iran could bring some sort of disaster? Israel would somehow stop. Everything is going to stop in Israel.

#Pepe

Which will be the next logical step in the Iranian strategy: raze Israel to the ground, paralyze the functioning of the Israeli economy and the Israeli state, attack all their key nodes—basically paralyze them, make that mini-state nonviable. They have four weeks to do that. Considering that they haven't even started properly, four weeks is more than enough to destroy most of Israel—most of what carries any sort of value in Israel: connectivity corridors, research centers, scientific centers, especially all the military nodes, all the special military sites. Israel is small, but it's an enormous military base.

So, hit all the key nodes of this military base. They can do this in four weeks. And then, obviously, we're going to have, once again, a phone call to the White House. And all bets are off on what the baboon is going to say. He could say, "There's nothing I can do to help you." He could say, "Look, I'm leaving this war. It's not my war." Or he could double down and bomb even more of Iran. We don't know what might happen. But there's a serious possibility that he'll try to extricate himself. Of course, he can't do that, because we all know why—the donors, you know, compromise, the abstinence files, you name it.

But considering that now he is—if there were a psychological examination of his brain at this moment, the result would be "lunatic asylum" straight away. Consider that he's now completely unhinged. Anything is possible. As long as he has something, after these self-imposed four weeks, to sell to domestic American opinion—not to the world, because nobody around the world is buying anything he says anymore—but to a fraction of U.S. public opinion that he "won." Which is the famous, "Okay, that's it, we bombed everything, we won, let's do something else." Which, in fact, he could have said yesterday.

He had an opening to do that yesterday. He decided, perhaps at the last minute, to prolong it for another two to four weeks. Once again, our analysis of the destruction of Iran—as much as possible—totally fits. In his revengeful mind, that's it: since I couldn't win, I'm going to destroy them. But obviously he's not calculating, because he's not a strategist. He's not considering the amount of punishment that Iran can deliver to Israel in the next few weeks. That's why we still don't know how he'll react by the end of April. In his mind, this thing ends soon—one way or another—by the end of April, because in May there's the trip to China.

He needs to arrive in China with something. He can't show up there as a defeated potentate. And, of course, he's already thinking about the midterms. At the same time, built into all of this, there's the destruction of the global economy. If this goes on for another four weeks, the damage will be irreversible, and it'll take years to get back to anything resembling normality. Everyone already agrees on that—Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, even American studies acknowledge it. Some are saying that even if we stopped now, it would take until the end of the year, maybe next year, to return to some kind of normality.

If it goes on for another four weeks, then we should start thinking about years of disaster ahead. So that's it. We're on a path where, in another four weeks, the damage to the global economy will be irreversible, with unimaginable consequences—especially for indebted countries, countries with no access to oil and gas, you name it. It's terrifying, Nima. Can you imagine? Because essentially, if we want to narrow it down, it's because of two war criminals that most of the planet is plunged into this dark void. It's really—it's terrifying. Yes, please, go ahead, go ahead.

#Nima

The war, Pepe—so far, look at the targets the Iranians had. It was basically radars, gatherings of American soldiers, weapons, ammunition—everything they had in the region. Those were the main targets of Iranian attacks, not only in the Arab states but also in Israel. Right now, I think one of the reasons—if you look at the curve from the initial days of this war—you see the number of drones and missiles fired by Iran was very high. Then, as they destroyed everything in those bases, the number started to level off. At this point, I think the sustainability of the war is what Iran has in mind—how to sustain it, how to continue as time goes by. But if the United States escalates—because Donald Trump is talking about four weeks—in the minds of the Iranians, it's not four weeks.

It's going to be four weeks—a long, long game, a long war. Even Israeli media is saying that. Yesterday, more than 700, maybe 760 drones were launched at Israel, and mostly sensitive locations were hit. The Israelis estimate that the Iranians are producing a huge number of accurate and cheap attack drones. Iran is preparing for a long battle—that's the calculation on the Israeli side. I think that's the reality. From what I understand of the Iranian military and their strategy, this is how they see it: they want to continue this war. They won't just go up and down. If some escalation happens, as Donald Trump was talking about yesterday, they'll respond the same way—maybe twofold, even threefold—just as they're attacking Iranian infrastructure.

But we have to understand that all around Iran—from Iraqi Kurdistan going south—we have these American bases, these, you know, collaborators with the United States. So Iran has to deal with all these issues around the country. That's why I think even with the attacks on desalination plants, schools, and water resources, Iran keeps its focus on strategic targets. But as these targets are totally depleted, totally out of operation, no longer working for the United States, that could hugely influence the economy in the long run, as you mentioned, because it affects oil facilities, gas facilities, and desalination. These are huge escalations, as Donald Trump was talking about just yesterday.

#Pepe

Well, the most rational strategy for Iran now would be to raze Israel to the ground, much more than the Gulf petromonarchies. And the Gulf petromonarchies—the important sites in Bahrain and Kuwait—were already hit. They can hit them again. Saudi Arabia depends on how the Saudis are going to act from now on, of course. And the key target is the Emirates, because once again, the

Emirates are de facto at war with Iran. So Iran should go after the infrastructure of its enemies. And that's it. It's not very complicated to erase it, you know, because they already know what's coming from the Epstein–Syndicate combo, which is indiscriminate bombing nonstop.

So they have to respond in kind. And these are the two key targets: Israel and the UAE. This is probably going to be the logic from now on, over the next few weeks. And obviously, off-ramps are out of the question. You saw the attempted assassination of Kamal Kharazi—his wife was killed, and he's probably seriously injured. He was one of the last negotiators still alive. After Kharazi, there will be no negotiators left. It will be IRGC hardcore. That's it. And they'll go all the way. So the possibilities of an off-ramp have diminished substantially this week, in the past 48 hours. So that's it.

We are into the logic of the infernal escalation machine, as I dubbed it in one of my articles last week. We're right in the middle of a no-holds-barred escalation machine with no off-ramp. It's terrifying, really. At least from that point of view—coming back to the big picture—we already have some of the results of this war, whatever happens next. One: the Empire of Chaos is never going to get its military bases in West Asia back. Never. They're gone forever. That was one of Iran's demands. Number two: the new regime in the Strait of Hormuz. That's it. It's not going back to what it was before. It will be negotiated with Oman.

So the Iranians have already set up how it's going to work in Iranian territorial waters. And Oman can do the same thing if tankers go through Omani territorial waters. Same thing—but it's both of them. It's a different system, completely different. Half of it is already in effect. That's it. You need to pay the toll booth, you need to communicate your essential information, you need approval from the IRGC Navy. Then it's okay. There are different strata. You can have government-to-government deals. For instance, it already applies to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, Thailand, the Philippines, India—it already applies. It may apply to Iraq, it may apply to others later. With China, no problem.

It's part of the strategic partnership. So let's see—the West, especially the West that applies sanctions to Iran. These are completely red cards to all of them. So we'll depend on perhaps individual Western nations trying to strike deals with Iran. That's another story. But the new system is already there. It's been approved by the Iranian parliament, and that's it. It's going to become law, and there's nothing anybody can do about it. So these results are not provisional; they're long-term results of the war already in front of us. And the third one, which is more immaterial, almost metaphysical, is that the aura of invincibility of the empire—it's over, also forever.

And this has been seen by the Arab streets, by the lands of Islam, by the Global South, by everybody who has eyes and a functioning brain. That's it. They will never recover from that. So, couple all of the above with the Petro-Yuan in effect, in the most important choke point on the planet. That's it. You have, I would say, 70% to 80% of the most important consequences of the war already happening. So what do they plan to achieve, Nima? Bomb Iran to rubble? Is this going to change any of the above? No. Absolutely nothing. The horror story will be, of course, for Iran as a nation and for 90 million Iranians. But they may rebuild. They have it in them to rebuild. And the

example of a sovereign, resistant, civilizational state going head-to-head with the empire, practically alone, and making the empire scream—wow.

This is the big lesson of the 21st century, which none of us expected would happen so fast. It's happening right now, in front of us. This is how multipolarity begins—under fire. There's no other way. That's it. So obviously, Nima, we can't expect those barbarians to understand conceptually what we're talking about. They feel that everything they imagined—not planned, because they didn't plan anything—went horribly wrong. Now they want it to end. They don't know how. And they know that if it ends, it ends with their defeat, their strategic defeat, which hurts even more. So there's no way out for them. This, in many ways, explains their blind rage.

So, you know, their blind rage is diverted to bombing civilian infrastructure. Is this going to change anything? No, it won't. And it will only harden Iranian resolve even more. Now, I have a question for you, Nima. It's a very sensitive one. Of course, it's speculative, considering it comes from different points across the Shiite world, the Arab world, across Islam as well, and from some informed people in the West. Can we say that the IRGC is now in full control of the Iranian state, and that Ayatollah Mostafa Khamenei is more of a symbolic, highly respected figure, but not the one making the final decisions? I'm asking for your personal analysis. You can give it as an Iranian—it doesn't have to be a geopolitical analysis.

#Nima

No, no. I think what's going on in the era of the new leader—the new supreme leader—is that, in my opinion, he's going to have pretty much the same sort of relationship with the IRGC. It means that he's the one who's going to call the shots. He's not part of the IRGC, but he has a very robust and close relationship with them. In a way, we can say they're almost the same. I think the correct way to put it is that there's no gap between the two. That's why they're so united in their goals, their aims, their objectives. So there's really no way to find something in between—no gap at all.

So, what would be the strategy as time goes by with this war in the Middle East? In my opinion, it would be this: the Supreme Leader of Iran, together with the IRGC, doesn't see the people living in these Arab states as their enemies. They see them as their brothers and sisters. This is the reality—people need to understand that. What's happening at the level of leadership in these countries is something totally different, and they recognize the difference between the people and the leadership. That's why I think, in the long run, the policy will be about getting closer to the people in the region—making the resistance, the whole movement... Pepe, you can see it in the acts of resistance.

It's not based on, you know, a few people who are running the show or who are close to each other—the leader of the resistance in Iraq and the leader of the resistance in Yemen. It's about the people. You know, the whole Shia faith is bringing all of them together. I think that after what has happened in Gaza and the West Bank, it's bringing not only Shia Muslims but Sunni Muslims

together. You know, that's a new sort of tone, a new sort of attitude, a new kind of movement happening from within the Muslim community. And many people in the West don't understand it; they don't appreciate what's going on. That's why Benjamin Netanyahu is talking about wanting to make some sort of alliance against the acts of resistance.

#Speaker 03

God, this guy doesn't know what he's talking about.

#Nima

You know, if MBS or MBZ—Mohammed bin Zayed—decides to make some sort of alliance with Benjamin Netanyahu, it's going to be him and, you know, MBZ together with their people, maybe 20 people, 80 people—that's all. It's not about the population in those countries. We have to understand that. We have to understand what's going on. You mentioned the case of Bahrain, the case of Kuwait. These are huge changes happening in the region, and Iran understands that. That's why I don't see, not only between the IRGC and the Supreme Leader of Iran, but even among those people, mostly, you know, the reformists.

You know, you see the way Pazeshkian is now—just compare Pazeshkian today with how he was when he was elected. If you read his tweets from yesterday and then the ones he posted when he got elected in Iran, the tone has changed. There's no real difference anymore. The people trying to draw a line between the IRGC, the reformists, and the leaders—I think they're all coming together. Because this is Iran fighting the empire. It's not the IRGC fighting the empire; it's Iran—the whole country, the population—fighting the empire and its vassal, its proxy in the Middle East, which is Israel.

#Pepe

This is the reality, I think. Did you— I haven't seen this anywhere. Was there any direct communication between Ayatollah Sistani or Ayatollah Sistani's office and Ayatollah Mustafa so far? They have? I haven't found this anywhere.

#Nima

They have close connections. Actually, he congratulated Mustafa Khamenei on his new position as Supreme Leader.

#Pepe

Sure, but I'm talking about the closer contacts, not just the formal acknowledgments.

#Nima

I see.

#Pepe

People are talking, I imagine.

#Nima

They're talking all the time—24/7, they're in contact. It's not just between Ayatollah Sistani and the Supreme Leader of Iran; the whole axis of resistance is communicating with each other.

#Pepe

That's for sure.

#Nima

That's a huge communication line that's happening. Yeah, yeah. Before, Pepe, before the war started, nobody was even thinking about the resistance in Iraq. They did everything. We were talking about the Yemenis and Sarlat, we were talking about Hezbollah. And you know how they were underestimating those two groups—the Yemenis and Hezbollah. They're totally different from how they were portrayed before in the mainstream media. Right now, they know the reality of these two forces. The importance of Iraq, Pepe, is something else, because Iraq shares a border with Iran, and it's close to Iraqi Kurdistan, where these Kurdish terrorist groups are based.

They are the main line of defense against these Kurdish terrorists if they decide to do something. That's why I think Iran has totally dominated the region so far. Everything is under Iran's control. And that's why many people are so comfortable with the war they're in. They know what they're doing. They know what the long run is, what it would be in the long run. But Donald Trump is trying to disrupt everything by attacking civilians, by bringing pain to the people. That's what he's trying to do.

#Pepe

Yeah, yeah.

#Nima

And the other point, Pepe—my question to you is how Russia sees the whole situation right now. We had... That's tricky.

#Pepe

That's very, very tricky. Very tricky. Well, we were supposed to go there this month, but they canceled everything in Moscow. We were told there's total concentration on the war. So, you know, meetings or conferences—they canceled everything in April. But the debate now in Moscow is very sophisticated, very tricky, because a lot of people are making direct comparisons between the Kremlin's attitude toward the SMO and the Iranians' attitude toward the American war against them. And some of these comparisons are not very flattering to the Russians. We can imagine how. But still, these discussions are very, very tricky.

Because depending on how you phrase it, you can instantly be branded as unpatriotic or even a traitor. So you can compare the methodology of the SMO, of the Kremlin, of the Russian Ministry of Defense, and the fact that they haven't, I would say, gone for the kill—for the jugular of NATO—so far. And we understand the long-term motivation. And, of course, in the case of Iran, they needed to go for the jugular, like they did from the beginning, because for them it's an existential war. It's a war inside the Iranian nation. The war in Ukraine is different—it's inside the new regions of Russia, but it comes from outside.

It comes from another nation supported by NATO. That's a completely different story. But I'm very curious, next time I'm in Moscow, to get deeper into it, because there are some rumblings that maybe the situation is about to change—that perhaps Russia, this year, finally goes for the coup de grâce, you know. And the pieces of the puzzle are being moved in a way that gives Russia a very strong probability this year to go for the kill, if they choose to. Iran is not a matter of choosing. Iran has only one choice: defend themselves and inflict maximum punishment on the Americans and Israelis. It's different. So... but in terms of support, for instance, what Lavrov said a few days ago was fascinating.

He confirmed that Russia is supporting Iran, but he didn't get into details because those are matters for the Minister of Defense and the big guy up there. It's a state secret, but everybody knows it's substantial—especially in terms of intelligence, and particularly precise satellite coordinates for the Iranians, so they know exactly what they're going to strike, and they strike with maximum precision. That's the merit of Russian intel, no question about it. So this isn't going to change. And, of course, there are, once again, rumors—but okay, first we have to see where those rumors are coming from.

There was an unmistakable message from the Kremlin that if Israel tries a tactical nuke, or even a nuke, against Iran, there will be consequences. And I'm sure the Americans got the message. Obviously, those psycho killers in Tel Aviv don't get messages from anybody. But I'm sure the Americans got it and told the Israelis, "Go slow, because if it happens, it's not us—you're on your own." The situation, as we all see, is moving literally all the time. It's totally fluid; it can go anywhere. All the horrible options remain on the table. And, of course, because of that, all the possible rational off-ramps are not on the table—or they stay there for one or two days, and then they disappear again.

#Nima

I think, Pepe, the outcome of this war for Iran would be that they're going to, after all, withdraw from the NPT. Iran is not going to be part of the NPT.

#Pepe

They have to. They have to. They have to. There's no reason for them to stay in the NPT anymore. Yeah.

#Nima

And in terms of the nuclear program, Iran is not going to negotiate with the United States. Iran doesn't care anymore about sanctions or anything else. Because right now, with the Strait of Hormuz, their plan is somehow shifting from the petrodollar to the yuan. They know how important that is.

#Pepe

It's already the petroyuan. And they found a source of income, so they don't even need to worry about sanctions. So what? Now we have our own income. We collect it in our own territory. This beats any sanctions. In fact, with one move—it's fascinating, Nima—at the same time they beat sanctions, SWIFT, and the petrodollar. Beyond clever, obviously. They had gained that before; this was one of the first things they achieved, years ago, certainly. But that's what it took to... and this is the move that destabilized the empire completely. Once again, because these idiots never—well, I'm not talking about the military-industrial complex as a whole.

I'm talking about the idiots around Trump—the three or four people he listens to. Obviously, they never planned it. They never thought this would be feasible. Once again, they thought they had a weekend war, that they'd win, and on Monday it would be "mission accomplished" and the markets going up. And now it's too late. You can see the rats scurrying as the Titanic flounders, right, Nima? He's trying to throw anybody in front of him under the bus—"Ah, it's not my responsibility." Now it's NATO's responsibility as well. So it's the planet's responsibility, except his. And he's the guy who gave the final order. Typical, man. Cowards. All cowards react the same way.

#Nima

I think NATO is done, Pepe, with what's happening in this war against Iran. Because Europeans are—somehow—even Austria came out today and said, "You cannot use our airspace or our bases to attack Iran." And this is the new reality that Donald Trump finds so difficult to digest, because for such a long time he was putting pressure on them—"from 2% to 5%." Now people in Europe are asking themselves, what's happening? If they can't defend Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain—how

could they possibly defend Europe? Or is it even possible anymore for the United States to help Europe? They've had those forces in Germany for such a long time; it's not something new.

In the aftermath of World War II, they're still there in Germany. You know, the head of the AfD is talking about how the United States should leave Germany. This is the reality. The new reality is not just about the leadership—the people are feeling that way too. What is the importance of the United States in Europe anymore? If Iran can push the United States out of the Middle East, then for Russia it's going to be easy to push the United States out if they attack. And Europe needs to come to some kind of understanding of what's going on. I think with the Strait of Hormuz, they're starting to realize that. They want to make a deal with Iran without the United States. Do you see that happening in Europe—people understanding the reality?

#Pepe

Let's say he told them something like this: "Sooner or later, you're going to have zero energy," just to wake them up a little bit. We don't know what's going to happen next. Another very important and, in effect, consequence of the war is the progressive dismantling of NATO. It's already happening. Many of us were saying, "OK, NATO and the EU are going to collapse. It's going to take a while—it'll be a parallel process." But it's happening much, much faster than any of us could have imagined. NATO is already collapsing now, in real time, right in front of us. And it's not because of Ukraine or the proxy war in Ukraine; it's because of the empire's war of choice against Iran.

Because then it touches... Of course, Ukraine has an energy component—no question. But this is much, much more serious. The Strait of Hormuz is the ultimate bottleneck. If you touch the Strait of Hormuz, the whole global economy is affected. And Europeans now see that they don't have energy—extra energy—from anywhere. No Russia, no Qatar, nothing. They have to do something. So maybe this is the beginning of... I wouldn't bet on it, Nima, considering the astonishing mediocrity of the whole European political class, with two or three exceptions. But obviously, they're already starting to think, "Okay, we need to do something. Okay, at least."

But the process of the parallel collapse of the EU and NATO got a big boost with the war as well. That's another positive consequence. How they're going to fare without the US—that's another story. It's their problem. They never thought this day would come. Well, it's here; it's knocking on their doors now, and they have to come up with a solution. And of course, they'll never change their mindset from one day to the next. I was reading the usual Polish or Baltic chihuahuas of Finland saying, "Now we need to reconstitute our defenses against Russia." It's always against Russia. Okay, with their spectacular armies that couldn't conquer a hot dog stand, and they want to reconstitute their armies to fight Russia. Good luck. Okay.

#Nima

Amazing. Yeah, I think Donald Trump was asking Poland to send their Patriot...

#Nima

They said, "No, we have one or two."

#Nima

After South Korea, now Poland—are you going to send everything to help Israel?

#Nima

It's unbelievable.

#Nima

It is. People need to understand that the United States is prepared to sacrifice everything—everything—for Israel.

#Pepe

Of course. But now it's in the open. It's not unbelievable—it's believable, because now everyone has proof, in front of the whole planet, that the only thing that matters to them is that death cult over there. Everybody else is a vassal you can use, you can profit from. But, you know, when the going gets tough, that's it—you have to save the death cult.

#Nima

Thank you, Pepe.

#Pepe

Thank you. You improved my mood. I was very depressed. I told Nima I was very depressed, but after talking to him, my spirits lifted.

#Nima

Thank you, Pepe. Grande prazer, as always.

#Pepe

Grande prazer. Thank you, Nima.

#Nima

I hope to see you here in Brazil. You have to come back to Brazil.

#Pepe

If I go to Brazil, it might be at the end of the year. It's a long way away.

#Nima

Yeah, sure, sure.

#Pepe

Thanks, everybody. A luta continua.

#Nima

Exactly.

#Pepe

Tchau, tchau, tchau.

#Nima

Tchau, tchau.