

Scott Ritter: WAR FAILED... NOW WHAT?: The Real Force Behind Peace

A fragile ceasefire is unfolding amid escalating tensions after strikes in Lebanon, exposing deep disagreements between competing peace plans. The discussion highlights how control of the Strait of Hormuz, global energy pressures, and China's influence are pushing both sides toward negotiations. The interview argues that military escalation has reached its limits, with failed operations and political pressure forcing a shift toward diplomacy. Regional dynamics, including Israel's position, Gulf states' roles, and potential economic gains for Iran, shape the stakes. Ultimately, peace is seen as necessary but uncertain, hinging on trust, enforcement, and broader geopolitical compromises.

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Latest news—what's going on right now with the attack on Lebanon? Israel, right after the ceasefire, attacked Lebanon. They hit many targets—more than 800, they're saying—and there are many casualties. The prime minister of Pakistan came out and said they're violating the ceasefire. Then we heard from the White House press secretary, Caroline Levitt, who said that Lebanon is not part of the ceasefire agreement. What is that? What's happening? On the other hand, Iranian media—one of the main news outlets in Iran—reported that oil tankers will not be allowed to pass through the Strait of Hormuz due to Israel's strike on Lebanon. What do you make of what's going on?

#Scott

Well, first of all, you know, there's this negotiation taking place. The ceasefire is a tenuous agreement that isn't going to be solidified until the two parties sit down and work out the differences between Iran's 10-point plan and the Trump administration's 15-point plan. The Trump administration's 15-point plan does not include Lebanon as part of the agreement; Iran's 10-point plan does. And therein lies the problem, because both parties entered into this, you know, defending their position. You know, this is a stickler.

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I mean, how, you know...

#Scott

This is the reality. How do you deal with Israel? You know, when we speak of a negotiation, it's a negotiation between the United States and Iran. But the fact is, it was the United States together

with Israel that attacked Iran. And Iran has said from the very start that, you know, Israel—this whole kind of Israel–Lebanon, Israel–Palestine situation—has to be part of a peace agreement. And so, you know, now we’re going to find out how serious the United States is about reaching peace with Iran. You know, Iran knows that its “nuclear weapon,” so to speak, is its control over the Strait of Hormuz and its ability to choke off the energy lifeblood of the world at a time when the world is starting to feel the crunch. I mean, there’s a reason why this agreement came out now.

And that’s because China has told Iran, “We support you, but we can’t keep supporting you if we die economically. If you keep choking the Strait of Hormuz, we’re in trouble. You have to sit down and start talking peace.” Because the Iranians are going to reject it—they don’t like the 15 points. They want the 10 points. But the Chinese said, “You need to do this now. You have to sit down and talk, at least begin the process.” And look, one of the first things that happened before the Iranians shut it down was that Iran shipped out oil. They signed contracts to deliver oil to China and Pakistan, two nations that desperately need Iranian oil. So, you know, the United States needs this peace agreement. Iran needs this peace agreement—but not at any cost. Iran isn’t going to.

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Israel doesn’t want it. That’s the problem.

#Scott

Israel doesn't want it. Let's talk about Israel for a second, okay? Israel's in a whole bunch of trouble right now. You know that, and I know that, because they sold Donald Trump a bill of goods—and they couldn’t deliver on anything. They said this was going to be regime change. They said it was going to be easy, that it was going to be quick, and that we could get the Strait of Hormuz, stop the Iranian nuclear program, and stop the Iranian missiles. And none of that came true. None of it came true. And Donald Trump now is in political hot water. He can’t keep escalating. He’s reached the end of his escalation limit—but so too has Iran. I know you and I have had our disagreements in the past, but I think my assessment has played out.

Iran can’t escalate further without committing suicide. The Chinese made that clear: “If you continue to choke the Strait of Hormuz, we’ll have to find other ways of doing business. We won’t support this.” And that would be the end of Iran, you know, because the United States would have no choice but to take the next step. He wants that. The Iranians don’t want that. Nobody wants that. So they chose—but it’s not surrender. Iran didn’t surrender at all. In fact, Iran is in a very strong position. And that’s why I think, you know, Israel—what Israel is afraid of is that if they allow this to happen, Israel will have to have a ceasefire with Lebanon. They’ll have to. There’s no ifs, ands, or buts about it. That’s why Israel is striking so hard right now.

They're trying desperately to cause as much damage as they can and to stir up as much angst about Hezbollah before Israel is forced to stop. Israel is losing in Lebanon—we know that. We know

Hezbollah is beating them. Hezbollah is pounding Israel. So I think Iran is going to send a signal. I think they're preparing right now for a major strike against Israel. They're shutting down the Strait of Hormuz and putting the United States on notice that this isn't a blank check. If you want to sit down at the table, bring your dog to heel—bring Israel to heel. And it's not just Israel. The United Arab Emirates, who launched an attack this morning—bring them to heel too. These are two players that are unhappy with what Donald Trump has done.

They feel abandoned because they have been abandoned. That's the reality of it. This is what happens to Gulf Arab nations that say, "And the United States attacks," and they're like, "Go ahead and win." The United States isn't winning. Now the United States wants out, and they're saying, "You can't just leave us abandoned." Well, I guess you can. That's the reality of dealing with the United States. But Iran, I think, is going to continue to punish Israel and the United Arab Emirates. They won't attack American targets, but they will keep up the pressure. And it's up to the United States to pick up the phone and tell the Israelis to stand down—you're part of this deal—and tell the United Arab Emirates to stand down—you're part of this deal too. So, you know, that's where we're at on this.

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Scott, you mentioned the UAE together. We know that Iran's response to the attack on Siri Island was to hit the refinery there—the oil facility on Siri Island. Then Iran struck Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE—all of them.

#Scott

Did they hit Saudi Arabia? I thought they hit Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE. No, Saudi Arabia as well—the pipeline. Yeah.

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Yeah, yeah. This is the response. I think the escalation happening right now has Israel behind the scenes. In the case of the UAE, I'm sure I can say Israel is behind it, because the UAE doesn't have that kind of capability to go against Iran with these sorts of attacks. They're not capable of doing this. That's why Israel is using them, in my opinion. I think the whole calculation right now is about how Donald Trump would be able—or how it's going to be possible for him—to control these people, basically the government in Israel. Because we've seen what's happening there: the opposition leader is hitting Netanyahu in a way we haven't seen before. He's just attacking Netanyahu because he's losing on every front.

#Scott

Look, as I said, Netanyahu is in trouble right now because he lied to Donald Trump. He sold Trump a bill of goods. And Trump, at the end of the day—no matter how influential the Zionists are in his administration—he's not going to commit political suicide on behalf of Benjamin Netanyahu. Right now, because of this war, Trump's in huge political trouble. He's looking to wipe the slate clean. Senator Markey just came out and talked about impeachment and criminal proceedings and things of that nature, which are real, because Trump has violated the Constitution and international law. He can't allow the Democrats to be empowered.

And Benjamin Netanyahu, basically by getting Donald Trump caught in this tar baby of a war, has empowered the Democrats to impeach Donald Trump—even convict him and destroy his political legacy. So Trump needs this peace agreement. He needs it desperately. And at the end of the day, he's going to tell the Israelis, "You'll be on your own. We'll make peace, and you'll be left to deal with the Iranians. They're going to blow the crap out of you every day of the week, and we're not going to be there to stop it. And, oh yeah, how are you going to rebuild again? Every time those Iranian missiles hit, they blow up some buildings—how are you going to reconstruct?"

Who's going to be backing you on that? Not us. You want to be on your own? Be on your own. You want to be a big boy? Be a big boy. And they're going to tell that to the UAE, too. You know, we'll be more than happy to have the United States work out a deal with the Iranians that allows all shipping but yours. You guys want to go to war with Iran? Go to war with Iran. You're big boys. You're the Sparta of the Middle East. You know, do it. But you're on your own. You're going to pay the price. And neither Israel nor the UAE can stand on their own. I think Donald Trump right now is desperate for a peace agreement—desperate—because he's maxed out his escalation capabilities. The United States has lost this war.

We don't have the ability to secure the Strait of Hormuz. If we did, we wouldn't be talking. That's the straight-up truth. If we could secure the Strait of Hormuz, we would do it. We can't do it. That's why the—well, we wanted to secure the nuclear material. Couldn't do it. Failed mission. And so we're done. We don't have anything. We can't escalate. We don't have the military capacity—no conventional forces on the ground. And with air power, all we can do is commit war crimes. And I think he's getting serious pushback. When he came out with his madman theory, I think many people in his administration said, "No, boss. This is genocide. This is collective punishment. This is a war crime. We can't do it." And so he reached the end of it.

He has to, at this point in time, find a pathway to peace. So do the Iranians. I mean, again, I'll just make this point: the Iranian leadership isn't here to commit suicide on behalf of fanatics. For the first time in their history, they have the opportunity to get all sanctions lifted, to get a clean bill of health from the International Atomic Energy Agency, to get the Director General's limits lifted, the Security Council's restrictions removed—complete. A clean bill of health and the ability to sell oil as they wish at fair market prices. No more steep discounts. Do you know what's going to happen to Iran when that spigot turns on, when that money comes in? Yes, they're going to have to rebuild and all that.

That's just blown up—buildings and bridges. You know, many of them were going to be reconstructed anyway. Iran is going to look like Dubai. I mean, we're talking new buildings, new construction. Maybe Tehran— you and I talked about this earlier—Tehran's too congested. Maybe they can build that new capital now, straight from scratch, because they'll have the money to do it. The Iranian government will be able to deliver on all the promises it has made to the Iranian people: a better way of life, a stable currency. I mean, being a businessman in Iran now with a stable currency—that's unheard of. BRICS, all the potential of BRICS. All this good stuff is about to happen to Iran, and Iran needs it to happen. But they're not going to surrender. They're willing to make compromises, and I think one of the compromises is they're going to agree to that agreement that was on the table before the war ended. They'll agree to it because they already agreed to it.

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They know that's a limit they can match.

#Scott

There will be no nuclear weapons.

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They don't want nuclear weapons. Of course they don't.

#Scott

They don't need it. They can beat the United States without it. That's the biggest thing here. This isn't theory anymore—Iran beat the United States in a straight-up conventional fight. And they beat the Israelis. And they beat the Emiratis. They beat everybody. Iran is emerging from this with such a masterful victory—as a nation, as a people, as a collective—they have everything to be proud of. So there's no reason for him to commit suicide. That's why I think Iran is, you know, swallowing this little cup of poison—because of pride, maybe, you know—but again, look at Donald Trump.

It's not Iran that was told on the tolling of the ships to back down. You can't do that. Donald Trump was saying, "Yeah, well, maybe we'll work with the Iranians to come up with a joint tolling process, you know, where we both make money off this deal." And there are a lot of people saying, "Why would Iran do that?" Why wouldn't they do that? I mean, again, throwing Donald Trump a couple of bones to keep him in this game—to bring down Israel, to bring down the United Arab Emirates, to bring calm so that the—

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You know, there are deals to be made here that don't mean Iran lost this war.

#Scott

There are deals to be made here to guarantee that Iran benefits, you know, tremendously from this. But it's going to require the United States to pick up the phone and put Israel and the UAE on notice. If Trump isn't willing to do that, then I don't think there's a ceasefire. And that'll be the end of Donald Trump politically. I mean, the thing we all have to keep in mind here is that, you know, while the grip that Iran has on the Strait of Hormuz results in a global energy crisis and creates geopolitical problems, that's not Donald Trump's foremost issue. His foremost issue is that his base feels betrayed.

And he needs to repair his relationship with his base. To do that, he needs peace. He needs to sell himself as a peacemaker. So there's room here for Iran, China, Russia, and, you know, everybody to make Donald Trump look good. But the losers in this game are those who joined in the cheering for this war—the United Arab Emirates and Israel. They aren't going to emerge victorious here. They may not be defeated, driven to their knees or anything, but they're not going to come out on top. And this could be the end of Benjamin Netanyahu. Already, the opposition is calling for his head.

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I think the Trump administration has sacrificed a lot for Israel so far. I think, as you mentioned, they're getting to the point where that's enough. Maybe. I don't know. But how do you see the negotiations? They're saying that on Friday they're going to meet, and then they said J.D. Vance isn't going to be there because of security issues. I don't see Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner as—well, Iran doesn't consider them serious negotiators. That's why they need to bring in something new, a bit of fresh air into the negotiations, which would be J.D. Vance, by the way, and that would help him in the upcoming presidential election.

#Scott

Yeah, we'll see how it plays out. I agree with you. I mean, Witkoff and Kushner have no credibility whatsoever. They were the guys who negotiated when, you know, the United States committed perfidy in June and in February. There's zero trust—nobody could trust them. J.D. Vance is the solution. You know, how do we get J.D. Vance to the table? Do we have to change venues? That would be a blow to Pakistan, which has done a lot of work getting this up and running. But no, I agree. I don't see how the Iranians could deal with Witkoff and Kushner. They need J.D. Vance. And for J.D. Vance, he needs this as well. He's on record as opposing this war, and he could help Donald Trump get the peace he needs. But he could also burnish his credentials as a national leader on the global stage. So they'll find a way to get J.D. Vance connected with the Iranians. I'm confident about that.

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We had, you know, I talked with John Helmer. He mentioned two factions within the Trump administration—the Jewish faction and the Christian faction. He said that J.D. Vance is in the Christian faction, which is why he wasn't really in line with what's going on with Iran, with the war against Iran. Do you think this faction is going to get stronger as time goes by and somehow save Donald Trump and his administration?

#Scott

Yeah, there's a potential. I mean, the whole reason for this peace plan is to save Donald Trump's administration. And, you know, I think Donald Trump has woken up to the fact that he's been led down the wrong path. You know, this pro-Israeli crowd just about killed him politically, and the Israelis failed to deliver on anything. They delivered on nothing. You know, politics is the game of making manure look like ribeye steak—but you still need some reality here.

And I do think there are going to be people rallying around J.D. Vance now who are going to provide the medicine the MAGA base needs to rally back around Donald Trump and, you know, first, get him through the midterms. You know, J.D. Vance will not become president of the United States if the Democrats win and take the House in November, because J.D. Vance is going to become tainted with this administration—the impeachment hearings and the criminality, straight-up criminality across the board. That needs to be avoided. And so Donald Trump, I think, is going to do whatever he can to get the J.D. Vance image polished up, because it'll help Donald Trump.

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I think, Scott, the latest operation in Iran—as they call it, the rescue operation, the rescue of the pilots, you know, the second pilot operation—that was hugely influential, somehow connected to this decision on the part of Donald Trump. Because right after that, he said that on Tuesday at 8 p.m., we're going to have some sort of ultimatum for the Iranians. But what actually happened in that operation? Because we had Donald Trump talking for more than an hour, explaining each and every detail.

Then we had General Cain come to the podium, saying that everyone in Iran was shooting at us—with rifles, with everything. This is totally different from the image the Israelis and the Trump administration had suggested before, because they said the people were ready to be liberated by our forces. But when they go to Iran, they see something different. And the operation—the whole operation—what was that operation? What was the consequence of that operation that led to this sort of two-week ceasefire?

#Scott

Well, the operation wasn't a rescue mission by design. It may have become a rescue mission, but the fact of the matter is, this was a joint special operations task force working under the direct

command of the National Command Authority. I mean, it's outside of Central Command circles, carrying out a mission directed by the White House. You don't put something like this together on the fly. We know that the United States had a good idea where the nuclear material was. Why? Tulsi Gabbard told us in a public hearing. Now, she didn't get into too much detail, but we know she said that. And we know that the Wall Street Journal started publishing details about the preparations for a raid to seize the 60% enriched uranium.

This became the new, you know, way to manifest victory, because up until now we're losing this war. So how do we declare victory? We need something. So Donald Trump could say, "I want—we need to either seize material, open up the Strait of Hormuz, or do both." And so you have military planning for both options. The, uh, this nuclear raid—and I believe it was a nuclear raid—there's so much information that suggests that's what this was about. It failed. The Iranians beat us. They detected it and made it impossible to carry out. Now, whether or not there was an adaptation to the mission plan before they launched or after—I think after, because I think they got on the ground and basically the mission failed, and they said, "Well, get the pilot out at least."

Or the pilot could have been a ruse. We don't know what was going on with that pilot—if that was all real or if it was just a cover story to disguise the fact that the premier commando unit in America failed. This was a failed mission. You know, we—I think we can carefully reconstruct where they were going. There are enough hints about that. Tulsi said she knows where it's at. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists published a very detailed paper on it. You know, the IAEA and satellite tracking show they're confident that at the south tunnel entrance of the Isfahan tunnel complex, a truck took twenty-eight blue storage cylinders that are consistent with what overpacking looks like for carrying the cargo—the uranium hexafluoride containers—and that they were at the south tunnel. That south tunnel has been sealed.

So if it's there, how do you get it? You're not going to have a bunch of Navy SEALs and Delta guys, no matter how big their biceps are, sitting there digging that out by hand. You're not going to be able to bring in a bulldozer or anything like that. Go to Firdos for guidance. Firdos was the underground enrichment facility that was bombed by the United States in Operation Midnight Hammer. You know, everybody said, "Well, you can't collapse it—it's too deep," and all that kind of stuff. But DARPA spent years finding a ventilation shaft there, did the technical assessment, and we put two bombs straight down the ventilation shaft, and we achieved some sort of result. Even the Iranians were like, "Yeah, you achieved a result." They're not telling us what we achieved, but we achieved a result.

My guess is based on what the president said—he said we had scaling equipment to climb mountains. Well, we weren't scaling mountains; we were going down a mountain. I believe there was a ventilation shaft somewhere in the south tunnel complex that had been discovered. The engineering drawings had been found, and we were going to land on top of that ventilation shaft, go down through it, pull the material out, take it back, and fly it out. I think that was the mission, and it could have unfolded over several days. We were supposed to land at an airfield, seize it, and hold it.

Notice Trump said we had anti-aircraft missiles—that implies we were deploying out and securing a perimeter. We had aircraft, B-1 bombers, that were specifically tasked with cutting off the roads to that area.

And they started that mission. We can sit here and talk about how it was to block people from getting to the pilot—no, they bombed those roads to block heavy military equipment from reaching the airfield we were holding. We had aircraft flying in. The problem is, the Iranians were able to shoot at us. We didn't control the skies. It appears that the first C-130 landed on this airfield relatively unimpeded—got bogged down at the end, but that's a different story. The second one coming in, however, appears to have been engaged successfully and took damage. There's physical evidence of damage on it. We don't know if there were casualties, but it took damage and landed. The question is, was it able to leave? And what happened to the equipment on board?

You know, some of the helicopters—the Little Birds—were, you know, parked outside and were destroyed, but some were still on the aircraft. The implication is that they were hit and were, you know, non-mission-worthy. So this mission was aborted when it got hit—when that second C-130 came in, took damage on the way in, and was aborted there. That's when the realization hit that we didn't have sufficient resources to carry it out, and we were compromised. You can't—if you need to operate for several days—the idea is that you land at night and operate at night, but during the day you sort of lay low. But now we had to operate, and we'd been compromised. The Iranians were coming in. This mission just went to hell in a handbasket.

And it's a huge embarrassment. That's why so much effort was put into spinning this as something other than what it was. This was a failed mission to raid Isfahan that got converted into a cover story. I mean, you know, I'm not an expert on technology, but this whole "heart-murmur CIA detecting the beating heart of a pilot from 40 miles away" thing—come on, that smells like such horse manure. It's not even funny, you know? No, they've got to come up with a better story than that. And no one's quite explained how the pilot made it from where he ejected to his mount with a broken ankle. You know, the more I look at this, the more I just see it not being a good story. Who knows? Eventually the truth will come out, because people will talk, and books will be written, and movies will be made.

So we'll find out. But the bottom line is, we failed. This is a huge embarrassment for the president. So then he turned to, "Can we take the Strait of Hormuz?" And I think the military came back and said no. And now the president was confronted with a failed mission to get the nuclear material, so he's no longer invincible. You know, Pete Hague said, "We're lethal, we're better, we could do it better." Well, Pete, you got beat by a bunch of farmers with bolt-action guns and some police units using the ZSU-2, popping you as you came in. You weren't defeated by high-tech Iranian technology; you were defeated by Iranians defending their country, who shot your planes out of the sky. And that's it. Now you want to go in and take an island that you can't take. And I think the military said, "We can't accomplish this mission."

