

Pepe Escobar: Oil Chokepoint: What a Hormuz Blockade Means for You

See Full Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/live/46I3oA-N6bM?si=e4DD-0XbVx5x78N0> Follow me: Substack: https://substack.com/@dialogueworks?utm_campaign=profile&utm_medium=profile-page X (Twitter): https://x.com/Dialogue_NRA Patreon: https://patreon.com/Dialogueworks?utm_medium=unknown&utm_source=join_link&utm_campaign=creatorshare_creator&utm_content=

#Nima

In the case of the negotiations, we had J.D. Vance suddenly leaving Islamabad, Pakistan, and then Donald Trump announcing a blockade on Iranian ports. What does “blockade” mean, in your opinion?

#Pepe

He's blockading himself inside his four-year-old psyche—that would be the best definition. He thinks this is a genius move. In his mind, Iran is blockading the world, which it's not. Obviously, nobody explained to him how the five-tier passage through the Strait of Hormuz works. So, in his very childish mind, it's like, “Okay, I'm going to blockade them—Iran as a whole. Not only the Strait of Hormuz, but all the Iranian ports.” This is—okay, stupid doesn't even begin to describe it. First of all, to impose a blockade, you need an armada. Where's the American armada? Nowhere to be seen. Nobody knows where they are. Well, actually, people know where some of it is. Which one? It's in the Arabian Sea, but very, very far from the Gulf.

#Nima

Abraham Lincoln. It's Abraham Lincoln.

#Pepe

Sorry, sorry, sorry. My brain is mush. All right. The Abraham Lincoln is, let's say, in the eastern part of the Gulf of Oman—practically in the Arabian Sea, more in the Arabian Sea than in the Gulf of Oman. And the other assholes, they're off the coast of Namibia—the George H.W. Bush. Why? Because they're cowards. They can't cross west and go through the Red Sea. Because guess who's there just waiting? Our friends in Saada, the Houthis. So they're circumnavigating Africa to escape from the Houthis. This in itself is absolutely outstanding, isn't it? So they have, what, two or three destroyers? Not much. I was talking to Nima before we started. I wrote two articles back to back, yesterday and today.

But because the editorial process is so slow, at the time we were talking—it was 10 p.m. in Southeast Asia, 6 p.m. in Moscow—they still hadn't been published. In the first article, which you'll see later, I detail all the minimum requirements needed for this "invincible armada" to start applying a blockade, based on military calculations. And even one of those eternally retired U.S. military men who become CNN talking heads—in this case, Stavridis—was saying, "Look, we're going to need all that, and we don't have it." So all of this is detailed in the column. Until they muster this whole armada into position, it's going to take quite a while. For the moment, technically, we have a blockade because CENTCOM said there is a blockade.

But apparently it's a blockade on two parallel tracks. One targets only Iranian ships and those going back and forth to Iran—these are blockaded. Theoretically, everybody else is not. That means Western ships, ships aligned with the U.S., Europe, South Korea, Japan, whatever, coming from other ports in the Persian Gulf—in the Emirates, for instance. So how are they going to enforce and police all that? And considering how slow the Pentagon's machinery works, this could take months to put in place—not weeks, months. For the moment, we already had a fantastic case today: the first ship that, after the proclamation of the blockade, actually transited the Strait of Hormuz. Very important.

Chinese-owned. They were broadcasting on an open channel for every tracker on the planet to see—Chinese-owned and crewed. Everybody knows it belongs to a Chinese company in Shanghai, but it's sailing under a Malawi flag. Very, very interesting. And even more interesting, it didn't leave from Iran; it left from Sajah, in the Emirates. So technically, it's not a target for the Americans because it departed from a port that isn't Iranian. So they passed. They paid the toll in crypto yuan—no problem. But this means that, technically, the blockade exists, but it's not being applied. They don't know how to enforce it. For instance, there wasn't a single American ship sent to check whether this tanker was what it claimed to be. Nothing.

So once again, Nima, this is a gigantic PR op, right? Essentially, nobody knows how this is going to be enforced—how they're going to manage this invisible armada, how long it's going to take. And worse, much, much worse—and this I had confirmed by one of my Chinese sources—is that if they start threatening or harassing Chinese tankers, I'm not even talking about the Iranian shadow fleet tankers going to China, but Chinese-owned tankers like the one that crossed today—it's Chinese-owned, sailing under a Malawi flag—the PLA Navy is going to send a task force. And this task force will be very close to the opposing American task force. So can you imagine, Nima, between the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea, we'll have practically a face-to-face between the PLA Navy and the U. S. Navy?

And this is a done deal. The Chinese are just waiting to see if CENTCOM has the guts to, first of all, interdict a Chinese tanker. Are they going to board this Chinese tanker? Are they going to redirect it to Djibouti, for instance? Give us an example. Or are they going to try to sink a Chinese tanker if it refuses? So this is what the whole planet is waiting for. If push comes to shove, this is where we're heading. And all that to tell you, Nima, and our audience, that this is not a blockade of Iran. This is a

blockade of China, essentially—disguised as a blockade of Iranian ports. This is the American Holy Grail, which goes in parallel with something very worrying that's happening concerning Indonesia.

The Indonesians are trying to hedge their foreign policy. So they have Prabowo going to Moscow, where he met with Putin yesterday and said, "We need more collaboration on the oil fields," etc., blah, blah, blah. But they also have their Minister of Defense signing a sort of partnership with the Secretary of Forever Wars in Washington. We still don't know the details about all that. What's being spun in D.C. is that, sooner or later, the Americans are going to start sending troops for training in Indonesia. Can you imagine the Chinese, the Russians, and other BRICS members when they look at this? Obviously, they're going to pick up the phone and say, "Okay, what are you playing at? We facilitated your membership in BRICS as a full member."

And you're coming with this gimmick now? We still don't know how this is going to evolve. But it's very, very worrying for one single, larger-than-life reason. Guess which nations border the Strait of Malacca? Malaysia and Indonesia—not Singapore. Singapore is down there; the strait itself is between them. I crossed the strait myself, even navigating many years ago. On one side is Malaysia, on the other side is Indonesia. This is the Strait of Malacca. And obviously, everybody who follows Mackinder, Spykman, Mahan—you name it—the whole blah, blah, blah about Eurasia, the Heartland, the Rimland, and all that, knows that China started to diversify its sources of energy to escape from Malacca. I've been writing about this for over 20 years. This is one of the big, big stories of the 21st century.

How China has managed so far to escape the Strait of Malacca—but not all the time. Because everything that comes from the Persian Gulf goes through the Arabian Sea, has to cross the Strait of Malacca to get to the South China Sea, and then to China. So China is still, I would say, a hostage of the Strait of Malacca. But we can see that the American game is always the same thing. It's Thalassocratic—after "Britannia rules the waves," it's "America rules the waves," and ruling the bottlenecks. So if they cannot get what they want from Hormuz, which would be a big, big setback, they'll concentrate on Malacca. There's no question about that. That's why this whole thing is very, very worrying. And it's happening at the same time.

#Nima

I think the practical difficulty the United States has right now, as you mentioned, is that the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier is far from the Iranian coast. So how are they going to be able to blockade the Strait of Hormuz or that waterway? Because it's...

#Pepe

Good question, Nima, because they don't have the guts to go into the Persian Gulf or the Strait of Hormuz. They're going to block the exit—and that exit is very, very far away. It's in the Gulf of Oman. It's exactly that area—the Gulf of Oman. It's the same sea. It's ridiculous, but it's the same

sea. I was driving there last year when we were shooting our documentary. It's beautiful—the Makran coast in southeast Iran, in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, all the way to the Iran-Pakistan border. From the port of Chabahar in Sistan and Baluchistan in Iran to the port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea in Balochistan, Pakistan, it's less than 100 kilometers.

And somewhere in between, we have this artificial division between the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It's basically the same thing, but there's an artificial border in the middle. The Americans are on the east side of that border. They won't dare to move closer inside the Gulf of Oman because they'd be very close to Chabahar—and there's a military base there. By the way, if I'm not mistaken, the Americans have already bombed that base in Chabahar. So they're going to stay very far away. The American blockade line, if we can call it that, will be somewhere between the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea—once again, very far from the Strait of Hormuz.

#Nima

It's so wide as well, but we know they'd have to use some kind of speedboats to do that. Without speedboats, they wouldn't be able to do it. It's impossible.

#Pepe

And helicopters, Nima. To board a ship, you need a mix of speedboats and helicopters—a lot of them. Or maybe drones. Drones as well. But the Iranian defenses, they know all that, and they're pre-positioned all along the coast, along Sistan-Baluchistan too, all the way to the border. So, wow, the possibilities of serious clashes are gigantic, of course, and it's going to be really hardcore. They would need a massive armada to do this—and they don't. They just don't. Those two aircraft carriers are going to be sitting ducks wherever they are, Nima. Sitting ducks for the long-range Iranian ballistic missiles. It doesn't matter that they're 800 kilometers from the Strait of Hormuz. It doesn't matter. For the Iranian missiles positioned on the southern coast near the Persian Gulf, that's not a problem.

They have a range of 1,500—no problem. So the only plausible explanation for the moment is that, once again, this is a PR coup. This is, let's say, another instrument to see if Iran cracks. Obviously, Iran is not going to crack. It's interfering, of course, with the possibility of the negotiations continuing. For instance, the Pakistanis are spinning like crazy that there's going to be another meeting on Thursday. There's no confirmation anywhere—in Tehran, in Washington, or elsewhere—that there's going to be another meeting on Thursday. For the moment, people are still digesting what happened on Saturday. And now we have a pretty good idea of what happened, via our friends like Professor Marandi, via Iranian members of parliament who were inside the room. And when you read what they said... it's mind-boggling.

But something we already suspected—the nuggets of information—was that the Americans had absolutely no clue about the technical dossiers. They didn't know shit. We already knew that.

Second, apparently, according to Araksha himself, at the beginning the conversation with Vance was relatively civilized. But after the direct interference from the genocidal in Tel Aviv, the whole thing went downhill. I think this is confirmed by every source from the Iranian side and from some Pakistani sources as well. So people are still digesting all that and saying, okay, why did they go to Islamabad in the first place? To buy time, obviously. Second, to, in a sense, throw events into the fire. Trump is a very, very nasty character, and he knew that—that's why he didn't send Marco Rubio in the first place.

They went to see a bloody UFC match on the night of the most important diplomatic negotiation in the history of U.S.–Iran relations in 47 years. It's pathetic. It's pathetic. And they put Vance in the line of fire, knowing he had no autonomy to decide anything—hence those maybe twelve phone calls to the White House. He couldn't decide anything on the spot. And then, in the end, he came up with that stupid excuse: "Iran was not prepared to accept our final offer." What kind of negotiation is that? These idiots. Okay, send these idiots to a carpet bazaar in Iran so they learn how the art of the deal works. This is how the art of the deal works. Obviously, they have no clue about it. So, the possibility of another encounter this week—I'd say it's minimal, especially two days from now.

I don't see it happening. But this is where we are at the moment, Nima. At least now we have a pretty good idea of what really happened in Islamabad. And I would say, credit to the Pakistanis, because they tried everything—regardless of our judgment about the current, I'd say, military junta and the civilian population. These guys, the current regime in Islamabad, really worked their asses off. And once again, I talked about this somewhere else, but I think for our audience it's important. There's an outstanding photo—I think it was shot by a Pakistani photographer. You see the back of Vance, not his face, but you see the face of the Pakistani foreign minister, Dar, and he's absolutely dejected.

He looks like he wants to kill himself. But on the right side of the photo, talking to Vance, we see Field Marshal Asim Munir. And you can read his face—he's pissed to death. He's pissed to death. We can't paraphrase, even if we don't know exactly what he was saying, but we can understand that he was telling Vance, "So you come to my country to mess us up after all the work we did to put this thing together? Think seriously about what you're doing." And Munir—come on, Munir isn't intimidated by anybody. A shark comes in front of Munir, the shark runs away. So I can imagine Vance, who has no international experience, especially at this level, was probably terrified, right? I think this photo tells a lot about what happened in the background.

#Nima

I think he saw the quality of the Iranian negotiator. Basically, he's not even comparable to Qalibaf. Many people don't know Qalibaf—he's gigantic.

#Pepe

Okay, Nima, tell us what you know about Qalibaf—in one minute.

#Nima

Okay. He has a lot of experience, Pepe. He revolutionized the police—the whole police system of Iran. Long before, maybe 20 years ago or more, he was the mayor of Tehran. Right now, he's the head of the parliament. But he's gigantic when it comes to negotiations—his capabilities, his ability to negotiate, to talk. He's just unbelievable. He's not even comparable to J.D. Vance. I would say none of those people who were in Islamabad negotiating have any clue who these people really are.

I think J.D. Vance, when you hear J.D. Vance talking about, you know, before leaving Islamabad, he just perceived—who are these people? Because they know what they're talking about. They have full authority in what they're doing. They know exactly what they're doing, and they have the whole framework from the Iranian leadership. They don't need to call anybody in Iran. But Qalibaf, Pepe—I would say Qalibaf is one of the most... you know, he's so educated, so civilized. He respects everybody in the room, everybody. But he's also so strategic in the way he talks—so strategic.

I've seen him for many years, how he is, and he's a gigantic person. I think the Trump administration would realize that as time goes by. I think after the first round of negotiations, J.D. Vance has some sort of understanding of who Qalibaf is. The guy isn't there to intimidate anyone—he just talks in his own way. He's so charming when he speaks, but he knows exactly what he's talking about. He knows what he's after. Yeah, he knows everything. I'd say he's one of the best negotiators Iran could bring to the table. And he's leading the negotiations right now on the Iranian side.

#Pepe

Yeah, absolutely. Nima, there's something—considering what you've learned and what you've heard from your connections, your sources—there's a lot of talk about Iran possibly offering five years without enrichment, while the Americans, from the beginning, wanted twenty years. The IRGC denied it completely. And obviously, we didn't hear in detail from Qalibaf or from Araqchi whether they actually made this offer.

#Nima

No, no confirmation. Nothing from the Iranian side. We've heard nothing of that sort—five years, six years, two years—nothing like that. And on the other hand, I think it's so bizarre to suggest that the Iranians have accepted five years of some sort of suspension of their nuclear program. That's impossible, Pepe. It's impossible. Looking at the reality of what's going on right now in Iran, it's impossible. They're not going to do that. And the other part is that the whole negotiation on the uranium nuclear program is a very technical issue. It has a lot more to do with the technical teams than with the political figures.

I think that, technically, they can do something—they can confirm, they can negotiate together. But coming out with this idea that Iran has accepted five years, I think that's still a lie. They're just putting that out there to create an atmosphere that favors them in the negotiations. It's all propaganda. As you mentioned, it's PR, nothing more than that. And because nobody—well, you mentioned the member of parliament, who is, I would say, a 100% reliable source—he said that. What was it all about? He said it was all about the Strait of Hormuz. The United States was asking for twenty years; they said no. Those were the main reasons he mentioned—basically, the Strait of Hormuz and the Iranian nuclear program.

#Pepe

Yes, yes, yes. There's another thing... let me see. Now it's escaped me completely. Let's see if I still remember. No, I can't remember. I'm sorry.

#Nima

Okay, Pepe, but looking at what's happening right now—we had the UAE going to China.

#Pepe

And they get slapped. I'd say they got a kick in the mouth. Can you believe, Nima, that the arrogant, self-entitled son of MBZ goes to Beijing, meets Xi Jinping, and lectures Xi Jinping about China's relationship with Iran? Can you believe this? This is what happened. And the Chinese foreign ministry—well, you know, they basically told him off, like, "Go back to your place, go back to where you belong." It's ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous. But it confirms once again that the UAE is at war with Iran for all practical purposes. And the IRGC is going to have to do something about it, no question. They already said—the most lenient statement they made publicly—was that they refuse to pay the toll booths in the Strait of Hormuz. So what are they going to do? Send an Emirati armada? It's ridiculous. But for all practical purposes, this is very, very serious.

And it's indirect. And don't forget, they are a full member of BRICS, like Iran. So we have two BRICS members at war with each other. And obviously, because BRICS is in a coma nowadays—I assume today and tomorrow in Moscow, sorry, not Iran—it's in Moscow and Beijing. Now my brain is totally mush. The meeting between Lavrov and Wang Yi, in Moscow, sorry, between today and tomorrow. This is part of that. They're going to have to talk about this because they are the top two BRICS members. They have two members at war. And, of course, the fact that the UAE is a Zionist station in the Persian Gulf—they are deeply linked to the international Zionist system, especially the money circulation, with all their promises of investment in the American economy, building data centers in the UAE, etc.—I see this as the key problem all across the Persian Gulf.

What is Iran going to do with the UAE? Not the UAE—Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Dubai doesn't have much to do, because the business model of Dubai is already dead. But Abu Dhabi is another story.

How they're going to deal with Abu Dhabi is still up in the air. But it can't go on like this, because for all practical purposes, coming from Abu Dhabi, it's war. And when you compare that to Saudi Arabia, which used to be pro-war against Iran, now they're practically begging the Trump administration—just in the past 24 hours—to stop the blockade of the non-blockade, because they know what could happen.

Geo-economically, obviously, the Trump administration never considers these details. It's too sophisticated for them. They don't even understand the ramifications. But the Saudis do. The whole GCC thing is collapsing fast in front of our eyes. Not only is it already split, but it's disintegrating internally on the side that's, let's say, more pro-war against Iran. Qatar and Oman already know what they're going to do. They're neutral. They're trying to establish a relationship with Iran. They know where this is going. The new juridical regime in the Strait of Hormuz is going to be between Iran and Oman. They've already started talking about it.

On the Iranian side, it's more or less defined. Then they have to discuss sharing the Tumbus, exactly. And none of that is going to change. And American blockades imposed by a four-year-old who now thinks he's Jesus—they're not going to change anything. Anything. And that's the thing, Nima, because once again, this whole mess propels us to the big picture, which, once again, is yet another chapter of the big, big war: the U.S. against China. And they're starting to use every trick in the book. So if they lose the Strait of Hormuz, that's it. They're going to attack in Malacca or somewhere else. No question. No question.