

Paul Craig Roberts: US Blockade Threat: War in Hormuz?

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#Nima

The negotiations in Islamabad, in Pakistan—what has happened? What do you make of what's going on there?

#Paul

Well, we don't have very good information. We get, you know, Trump's version. It seems to me what happened, Nima, is that the Iranians believed their ten-point program would be the document to be discussed and negotiated. They may have misunderstood Trump when he said he accepted it as a basis for negotiation. I don't think he ever accepted it. He grabbed hold of it just to get out of his impossible vow to destroy Iran that night. It seems the Americans came with their own version of what Iran was supposed to agree to, and this probably shocked the Iranians. Then Trump used that to avoid negotiating, claiming the Iranians wouldn't agree not to make a nuclear weapon.

But I've never seen any statement by any of the Iranian leaders—those still alive or those who've passed—that they intended to make a nuclear weapon. They've always said they wouldn't make one. As best I remember, Nima, Iran signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which means they agreed not to make a nuclear weapon. And as I understand the treaty, Iran retains the right to enrich uranium; they just renounce the right to use it to make a nuclear weapon. So everything Iran is doing is within its rights. They're not making a nuclear weapon. And why it matters, I don't know.

Why does it matter if they make a nuclear weapon? Israel illegally made nuclear weapons. Pakistan made them. India made them. Before long, everybody will have them. So the notion that a nuclear weapon in Iran's hands is more dangerous than a weapon in any other country's hands—what is the basis for that? I think we've noted several times on your program that Iran hasn't attacked anybody in a long time. It's not Israel. It's not the United States. So I think the Iranians should not have gone. They should have known that nothing could come of it. And by agreeing to a ceasefire, they broke their own vow that there would be no ceasefire.

So I thought when they broke their own rule—that they would not agree to a ceasefire—they showed weakness, and Trump quickly took advantage of it. I think that's what happened. The negotiations were a mistake for Iran, and the Iranian voice isn't as loud. It's easy to censor, so the world gets Trump's version, which is, "Well, they wouldn't agree not to make a bomb," which, as far as I know, is a lie. They broke their vow and set themselves up for Trump to, again, demonize them as people determined to make a nuclear weapon. Why it matters, I don't know. They're probably no more prone to use it than anyone else.

In fact, they may be less prone to use it. So that's my take on it. The negotiations in Pakistan were a mistake, and I don't really understand why Pakistan didn't see that. Why did Pakistan think anything could come out of a negotiation with Trump when Israel has Trump under their thumb? That's the reason for the war. Israel took Trump to war against Iran, just like they took him to war against Libya, Iraq, and Syria. And just like Israel told Trump and J.D. Vance to say the ceasefire doesn't include Lebanon. So Israel runs the show, not Trump. Trump is an agent for Israel. I saw the other day someone said Trump is Netanyahu's mistress—so maybe that's the case.

#Nima

Actually, what happened with the negotiations in 2020 was just one hour of talks. It seems that multiple times J.D. Vance called someone in Washington, and once he even called Benjamin Netanyahu. That's not a small thing, Paul. Why did he need to call Benjamin Netanyahu during the negotiations?

#Paul

Because Netanyahu is in charge—not Trump, not Vance.

#Nima

Yeah.

#Paul

You see, we've talked about it. What goes unremarked is that the cause of all the trouble is the Zionist agenda of Greater Israel. We've been watching this agenda unfold through the first quarter of the 21st century. It was presented to us by the American neoconservatives. First, it was Norman Podhoretz, the editor of that Jewish magazine—what's it called? I forget the name of it. It's so prominent.

#Nima

Which one? Haaretz?

#Paul

What?

#Nima

Haaretz?

#Paul

Haaretz? No, no, it's not a newspaper. It's an American—an American Jewish magazine, an intellectual one. I once had something published in it, but I forget the name right now. Norman Podhoretz was the editor. Let's see, what was it called? Anyway, he first presented the notion that with the Soviet collapse, the United States was now the unipolar power.

#Nima

We have **The Forward**. We have **Tablet** magazine. Those are the magazines, you know.

#Paul

No, no, it's a very prominent intellectual magazine. When I was at the university, as a professor, publishing in it was a sign that you really knew what you were writing about. It was a—look up Norman Podhoretz, and you'll see. He was a prominent Jewish intellectual.

#Nima

Whose name is Norman?

#Paul

Norman is Podhoretz—P-O-D-H-O-R-E-T-Z, I think.

#Nima

Yeah, the editor-in-chief—**Commentary**?

#Paul

Commentary, yeah.

#Nima

That's it.

#Paul

It's been some years since I've seen it, but it was a magazine that everyone interested in world events would read to see what the Jewish position was—the Israeli position. Anyway, it was Podhoretz who first set out in **Commentary** the idea of “seven countries in five years.” He said this could be done now because the Soviets were gone and there was no check on American action anywhere. And of course, this was before China was capable of standing up for itself. Then we saw it repeated in the American neoconservative publication **Project for the New American Century**, or something like that—I forget the exact name.

But there again, we see the Middle East is to be cleared out. And then we had four-star General Wesley Clark, the U.S. commander of NATO forces in Europe, who said on television two or three times that generals in the Pentagon had called him into the office and said, “Sir, look, we're going to attack Iraq.” And he said, “Well, why? Why are we doing that?” And the general said, “Well, we don't know.” Then the next time he was there, they said, “General, it's worse now—it's seven countries in five years.” And so he spilled the beans. He thought it was ridiculous, but I guess by then he was retired. So as long as you have this agenda—that God gave the Middle East to Israel—

There can't be any peace if that's the agenda of the Israeli government. And under Netanyahu and the Zionist parties that support his coalition, that's the agenda. Now, actually—if polls can be believed—it's a minority agenda inside Israel, but it has dominated the 21st century. So if you're faced with an agenda like that, you can't negotiate. What can you negotiate? The agenda is to get rid of the seven countries that are barriers to Israeli control of the entire Middle East. And the countries were named. Podhoretz named them. Sometimes they vary a little. I don't think Turkey was in the original group of countries that had to be destroyed by the United States.

And, of course, 9/11—when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked—was blamed on Osama bin Laden. This became what the American neoconservatives called the “New Pearl Harbor.” It was their excuse to go invade those Muslim countries, overturn them, get rid of them. And in fact, they have, because there's not a functioning state in Libya, Iraq, or Syria. Just the other day, one of the Israeli ministers described how much of Syrian territory was already part of Israel. And they said all of Palestine is now Israel—Palestine no longer exists. It's us, ours.

And they said that we now take Lebanon up to the river. So you can see they have an agenda of taking the territory of Arab states, of Muslim states. And, of course, Iran is one of them. Iran is especially in the way because it supplies Hezbollah in Lebanon, which resists Israeli encroachments. Iran also supplies the Houthis in Yemen. So you can see, if Iran isn't there, there's nobody to supply Hezbollah, and Lebanon is opened up for Israel. And if there's no one to supply the Houthis, Yemen is opened up. Israel has already claimed that Saudi Arabia is now part of Greater Israel. Well, if you're dealing with a country that thinks no one has a right in the Middle East to exist but Israel—and

remember, it was just in February, a couple of months ago—the former Israeli Prime Minister Bennett came to the United States to address the annual conference of American Jewish organizations.

And he said, “Turkey is the next Iran.” Well, at the time, they expected that the American and Israeli attack would get rid of Iran—and it hasn’t. It wasn’t successful. That doesn’t mean the Israelis have given up. This is the reason that any negotiation is pointless. It’s almost stupid. It makes no sense. And so it tells me that Pakistan has no comprehension whatsoever about Greater Israel, and neither does the Iranian government. The Iranian government doesn’t seem to be aware of something that has been widely publicized—the editor of **Commentary**, the Project for the New American Century, General Wesley Clark on television, Israeli prime ministers holding up a map of Greater Israel. It’s not hidden; it’s not a secret conspiracy. It’s wide open.

And no one ever pays any attention to it, just like it doesn’t exist. But that’s the reason there can’t be any negotiations. And I’m kind of puzzled that the Iranians aren’t even aware of what they face in Turkey. Now, yeah, in Turkey, Saudi Arabia—they’re all in line. They’re all part of “seven countries in five years.” And yet they’ve never united. They’ve never said anything. They’ve never asked Israel, “Well, why is it you think Turkey and Iran and Saudi Arabia and Iraq and Libya and Syria and Lebanon belong to you? How do you think that? We’re here. We’ve been here a long time. What do you mean this is Greater Israel?” They’ve never asked that question. So I guess they just don’t realize what’s in store for them. Or it’s, again, a triumph of hope over facts. Yeah.

#Nima

Paul, this idea of a naval blockade by Donald Trump came from an article on the website **Just the News**. And here’s what Donald Trump shared the same day that J.D. Vance was negotiating with the Iranians. Here’s the article—I think he found it that same day of the negotiation. That’s why he somehow came up with this idea. The article is called **The Trump Card the President Holds if Iran Won’t Bend: A Naval Blockade**. It’s written by John Solomon, and it talks about how a naval blockade could help Donald Trump. And considering that, Paul, J.D. Vance decided to leave Islamabad right after the first day of negotiations on Saturday, even though they had agreed to continue on Sunday. Suddenly he said, “I’m going to get back to Washington.” So the question is, why was that? What was the rush? And if he was willing to negotiate with the Iranians—because this idea of a blockade, a naval blockade—it’s not going to... no.

#Paul

Nima, the idea of a naval blockade is nonsense. The reason Vance went back was that when the Americans presented the terms to Iran, Iran didn’t accept them. So there wasn’t a negotiation based on the Iranian ten points. The Americans said, “Here, this is what you have to do.”

#Nima

But they said—well, today I talked with Professor Morandi. He was in Islamabad with the Iranian team. What he said was that they reached some sort of initial agreements, you know, about the framework of what would happen. It was all based on the Iranian standpoint plan. What the Americans were asking for—first of all, this is what the Iranians are talking about—the first point was that the United States wanted them not to enrich uranium on Iranian soil. That's one of the main points of disagreement between the two sides: no enrichment for twenty years. That was part of the first line. And then there was the Strait of Hormuz. The Americans wanted to be part of it, to share the benefits of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran responded by saying, "This is not the Gulf of Mexico; you're not going to get anything here." Those were the main disagreements between the two parties, as we learned from Professor Morandi today.

#Paul

It sounds to me like somebody making an excuse and not wanting to blame the Americans. So that account, for me, has no credibility. I don't believe a word of it. Now, you're implying that when Trump said he was going to blockade the Strait, Vance just decided to go home because the Strait was going to be blockaded. No, no, no.

#Nima

I said maybe it's related to what Donald Trump posted that same day. Maybe.

#Paul

I don't know. How's Trump going to blockade the Strait?

#Nima

Because he said that—he declared a naval blockade.

#Paul

Yeah, well, he says lots of things. He even says he's Jesus. But if the American ships get close enough to the Strait to blockade it, they're going to be blown out of the sea unless Iran surrenders. We already know the American Navy is stationed far off, hoping to stay out of range of the Iranian hypersonic ballistic missiles. So how's he going to blockade the Strait? Iran's got all these missiles, all these shore defenses, so if the American Navy's going to blockade it, it'll have to do it a couple thousand kilometers away. I don't understand—Trump said before he was going to escort ships through there, but he can't do that. He's said before all the things he's going to do, but the Navy has to keep its distance.

The photograph of the two U.S. destroyers going through—that was on the 11th, when Iran opened the Strait while keeping their distance, in line with the agreement about the negotiations. Part of the agreement to have talks last Saturday, which was the 11th, I think, yes, was that Iran would open the Strait. But when the negotiations failed, they closed it. And there aren't any American destroyers going through there now. So I don't see what Trump's talking about—he's going to blockade the Strait? I don't understand why Russia, why the Kremlin, believes that. You know, the Kremlin has said, "Oh, he'll blockade the Strait, people can't get the oil, and the price will go higher." But, you know, the original Trump program was to get the Strait unblocked, and now his program is to block it.

#Nima

Just amazing. Now, let me ask you this—

#Paul

How does it hurt Iran if the Strait's blocked? They don't need oil revenues to finance the war. They've got enough missiles. They can make what they need. They don't have to have foreign exchange to buy it abroad—they wouldn't be allowed to under the sanctions. So as far as I can see, Iran doesn't need those revenues, at least not to carry on the war. So what does it matter? But Trump can't block it. Unless our Navy ships are immune to hypersonic ballistic missiles—and they're not—if they were immune, they'd be there now, not two thousand kilometers away. So the talk about blocking the Strait—nonsense. It's just nonsense. And, you know, I was in Washington twenty-five years.

Negotiations—the people conducting them want them to go on forever, and they get mad if they're broken off. The incentives negotiators have are quite different from those of the government that sent them there. So, you know, whatever this Iranian professor said doesn't really make any sense. The example, the answer given by the American side, was that Iran wouldn't give up making a nuke. Now, I think the claim that they won't give up making a nuke is based on the fact that they're standing by their rights under the Non-Proliferation Treaty to enrich uranium. I think, you know, it's been so long since I looked into all that.

I may be wrong, but I believe the countries that signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty are allowed to have nuclear power plants and to enrich uranium for medical isotopes and other legitimate uses. They just can't enrich it to the level that would provide material for a bomb. And Iran has always agreed to that—they've already signed the treaty. We also had an agreement with Iran that the United States broke, in which Iran said, "We're not going to make a bomb." So now, all of a sudden, the story from the Trump administration is that they're going to make a bomb, and therefore they wouldn't agree not to make one.

And so we're going to blockade the street. Look, the Israelis are not going to let there be peace. As soon as the negotiations were announced, what happened? Israel attacked Lebanon. They bombed Tyre, the biblical city. I think it's a Christian city—it's full of Christians. And there were something like 2,000 dead and wounded. Of course, they weren't soldiers. They were bombing residential areas—civilians, apartment buildings, homes. So clearly—so what did the Americans do? Well, they covered it up and said, "Well, that's not part of the ceasefire." But it is part. The Iranians said that's part of the ceasefire.

That's another reason the Iranians shouldn't have gone to the negotiations—because the Israelis had already broken the ceasefire by bombing Yemen. It was part of the—no, not Yemen, Lebanon. Not bombing Lebanon was in the ten points. There was supposed to be a ceasefire everywhere. And then Israel says, "Well, we're not going to have one in Lebanon." And then Trump and Banks said, "Well, the agreement doesn't cover Lebanon." But it does. So why did Iran go? That's another reason they shouldn't have gone. The agreement was already broken before they got there, and they had to break their own vow just to agree to go. So that's two signs of weakness that Iran displayed. And then Trump just said, "Hell no."

#Nima

They're weak.

#Paul

Give them our demands. And if they don't take it, it's over. So I think that's what happened. The Iranians should have said, "Well, you negotiate with yourself. You won't even keep the agreement long enough to have a negotiation." You know, there are so many reports—he said this, he said that. It doesn't matter what any of them say. The only thing that matters is the Zionist agenda of Greater Israel. That's the only thing that matters. If that agenda is the agenda of the Israeli government, there can be no peace in the Middle East unless that agenda is realized and all the countries go the way of Libya and Iraq and Syria—or Israel is destroyed. There's no other possible outcome. So all the talk about negotiation—it's mindless, it's nonsensical. You're going to negotiate with somebody whose intent is to destroy you? Well, how do you conduct that negotiation? Only destroy part of us? How do you negotiate when somebody says, "I'm going to kill you?"

#Nima

What can you even negotiate?

#Paul

If that's the agenda, there's nothing to negotiate. You fight for your life. And that's the situation Iran is in. If the United States and Israel win in Iran, then Turkey's next—just like former Israeli Prime Minister Bennett said. Then it will be Saudi Arabia. And of course, if Iran goes, Lebanon's gone, Yemen's gone, because Iran is the source of their ability to feel resistance. It's so clear and obvious. I don't understand any other aspect of the discussion. What's the point of it? You know, what's wrong with the Russians? Why did the Kremlin say, "Oh, if Trump blockades the Strait, blah, blah"? Why do they think he can blockade the Strait? You tell me—how can he blockade the Strait? Tell me, how? How can the U.S. Navy blockade the Strait? How?