

Ritter: Hormuz BOMBSHELL Stuns Trump, Israel SHATTERS Lebanon Ceasefire

Former UN weapons inspector and US Marine Corps Intelligence Officer joins to discuss the latest flurry of events in the Iran war, from Iran asserting control over Hormuz Strait AND the Red Sea, to Israel violating the ceasefire already despite Trump claiming victory. <https://scottritter.com/PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai...> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> Follow me on Telegram: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong> #iran #redsea #trump

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I'm joined by returning guest, friend of the show, former U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer, U.N. weapons inspector, author, and geopolitical analyst, Scott Ritter. Scott, good to see you again.

#Scott Ritter

Good to see you.

#Danny

Thanks for having me. Of course. Everyone, hit the like button—that helps boost the show. I'm joining you from Hangzhou, China, so bear with any technical issues and let me know if there are any. Scott, I wanted to open up the show with the latest breaking news, and I'll just read what's being reported right now regarding the Strait of Hormuz. It's being said that Iran has reopened the Strait. According to reports, it was Donald Trump who went on Truth Social and said these exact words: "Iran has just announced that the Strait of Iran is fully open and ready for full passage. Thank you." Interesting—kind of a gaffe there, calling it the Strait of Iran.

But then a source close to Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf said that this opening is actually practically limited, based on the fact that there's now a ten-day ceasefire between Lebanon—Hezbollah included—and Israel. The conditions for this limited reopening are that all passage is rerouted through Iranian territorial waters via Larak Island. Only commercial ships are allowed, with Iran deciding which ships qualify. Enemy-linked vessels are excluded, and tows are still required for security and passage. All transit is coordinated by the IRGC Navy, with Iran fully controlling passage through the straits.

So, Scott, maybe you can react to this, because there's been a flurry of developments leading up to these warnings by Iran about the Red Sea and the ceasefire, which saw Israel and Lebanon come to an agreement. Then Israel broke it in the beginning, but now it seems like things have changed—died down a bit. Trump is guaranteeing that Israel won't attack during these ten days, and Iran is making good on its word, saying it would act in goodwill around this ceasefire, since it's been pushing for it from the very start of these negotiations with the U.S. So, talk about your thoughts and assessment on where we are now.

#Scott Ritter

Well, as I've said, the ceasefire wouldn't have happened unless the United States recognized the futility of continuing military operations. So it's the United States that's looking for an off-ramp. Iran, too, wants an off-ramp, but it's not going to make concessions that the United States and Israel haven't earned on the battlefield—and the United States and Israel have earned nothing on the battlefield. I think people need to understand that, strategically, the United States and Israel lost this conflict. They've achieved nothing; none of their objectives have been achieved. Iran has emerged with the regime intact, still able to launch ballistic missiles with great effectiveness and total control of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran hasn't yielded on any of the points regarding nuclear enrichment, and yet here we are with Trump declaring victory—because that's what this is all about. This is about political issues, not real practical ones. It's about how Donald Trump can spin things to his political advantage so he can claim that without his decisive intervention, nothing would have happened. So we're just watching a giant political game in progress. The Strait of Hormuz is open in the way the Iranians determined it would be. And Donald Trump can crow all he wants about this, that, and the other thing, but whose hands are on the handle controlling the spigot?

It's not an American hand; it's an Iranian hand. And what they've opened, they can close down. So now we have to see how Trump goes forward with this—whether he'll ignore the Iranian statement, continue to double down on the role he played, or, as he's done in the past, suddenly declare the Iranians to be liars and thieves and scoundrels, and then threaten and bluster some more. But the problem is—threaten and bluster more? What for? I know that Colonel McGregor is out there talking about a major American offensive that's going to begin next week—to do what, and with what? We're not bringing anything to the table that we haven't already brought, and any target worth hitting has already been hit.

Anything we're going to hit from now on is an empty building. I mean, the Iranians have shuffled the deck. You know, Pete Hegseth can claim that we're watching them do this, that, and the other thing, but clearly we're not. Because, you know, that Air Force we said we destroyed 100 percent—it's up and flying right now. The Navy we said we destroyed is in control of the Strait of Hormuz, with

ships out there laying mines. Every aspect of Iran's military has survived this conflict. We've effectively done nothing except show that we're impotent. Do we really want to put that on display again? I think not. The other thing is, there are certain realities.

Europe runs out of aviation fuel in 11 days. That means the entire European aviation industry ceases to function. The price—well, I just bought an airline ticket, and the fuel surcharge was about one-third of the cost of the ticket. And it's going to go up because it's gone crazy. Trump can't afford to go to war with Iran, to continue this war. He needs this conflict to end. Trump has a political problem here at home. He can sell, you know, his lies and his con game to his base, but his base is shrinking. There are people spinning off from the base; people aren't buying into his line anymore. And if he's going to, you know, reconvince people, he needs to put something on the table.

He needs to bring an end to this conflict and then, you know, spend the next month or so telling people how he's the greatest thing in the world, that this peace wouldn't have happened without him, and see if he can go into the summer with some sort of momentum. You know, and it's not impossible. With the economic difficulties we have right now, if he can get energy flowing, if he can get the price of energy down, he'll have one of those artificial boosts come summer, you know, where the problems he's responsible for go away. And he says, "It's because of me. I'm the greatest thing in the world." And maybe he convinces enough people so that the Republicans can hold onto the House in November, which is what this is all about.

If you think this is about real national security issues, you don't know Donald Trump. This isn't about national security. This is about Donald Trump trying to solve an inferior political position—one that, if he doesn't resolve, if he doesn't reverse course, will destroy his political legacy. If the Republicans lose the House in November, it's over for Donald Trump. It's over. He'll spend the next two years being impeached, and that's all he'll be known for. And if he continues to play stupid games, he could lose the Senate, and then he'll be impeached and convicted. So Trump can't afford for this war to continue. I think we're going to see a lot more positive spin coming from Trump, where he's going to try to say that he's responsible for all these things happening.

#Danny

Yeah, and Scott, he's almost guaranteeing that in the next, what, few days—or maybe just a couple of days—there's going to be some kind of deal reached. And of course, it's being framed as a deal that's completely favorable to what he claims are U.S. interests. But then, for Trump, he's also saying that this blockade that's been, what, five days or so in the running, is going to continue, despite the fact that the Strait of Iran, according to him, has been reopened. What do you make of this? Because it's very contradictory.

Of course, oil prices—you mentioned elections and the price of energy and all of that—are obviously a major part of this, maybe the part that's influencing his actions and his administration's actions. But it's always very contradictory. And of course, the volatility of these markets is sometimes

predictable and sometimes completely unpredictable, which makes your conclusions, I think, very apt. So, talking about this blockade continuing despite everything—do you think this is all just huff and puff, or is it more warmongering amid an attempt to still find an off-ramp at the same time, which seems to be the case?

#Scott Ritter

Yeah, what blockade are we talking about?

#Danny

Yeah, the one that was supposedly declared four or five days ago, where I, of course, sent comments and said, "Yeah, they're interdicting the entire Indian Ocean." Yep, that one.

#Scott Ritter

The one where American ships can't get anywhere within 20 miles of the Iranian coast without fear of being sunk. So all ships transiting the Indian Ocean out of the Strait of Hormuz hug the Iranian coast and aren't interdicted by the U.S. Navy. The one where China says, "Pound sand, we're doing whatever the hell we want, and you won't touch us because that'll be the end of you." That one? The one where the Russians say, "I dare you to touch a Russian ship." That one? That blockade? That one. Yeah—no, there is no blockade. Again, this is part of the game Donald Trump's playing—to be seen, to create perception. But there's no blockade, none whatsoever.

#Danny

Yeah, and then there's the ceasefire element. I mean, Iran had, as you know, Scott, this ten-point proposal that's been around for a really long time—well before negotiations started between the U.S. and Iran. And a big part of it was, you know, a cessation and a real end to hostilities on all the fronts in the region, the resistance fronts. And now we're in this ten-day ceasefire period. I'm curious about your thoughts on—obviously these two developments are linked—but at the same time, we have a history here that we need to consider. How do you think Iran is going about this in terms of moving forward in these negotiations with the United States amid the ceasefire? And then, of course, the reasons and the roots of the ceasefire itself. Anything you want to comment on there?

#Scott Ritter

Well, look, again, we just have to get down to basic facts here. Fact A: America lost the war. That's why America was looking for an off-ramp. If we were winning the war, we wouldn't be looking for an off-ramp—we'd just keep hammering away until the Iranians surrendered. We're the ones who said we needed this thing to come to an end because our bases were being eviscerated. Israel had no more defense. Iran's missiles got stronger and stronger, and we had reached the limit of our

escalatory capabilities with conventional weapons. The next step would have been literal cultural genocide. I mean, that's what Trump was talking about—the erasure of Iranian civilization. Not that he would have been able to do it, but the measures that would have had to be undertaken to put action to those words would have been war crimes beyond belief.

So bad that I believe American generals told the president, "No, we're not doing this." That's why he had to find an off-ramp—because the military balked and said, "We're not committing war crimes on your behalf." Then there was the failed raid against the Isfahan nuclear storage facility. We couldn't make an amphibious assault on Kharg Island because we'd lose everybody. Trump had no cards. It was done, finished. So he sought this off-ramp. Remember that—he sought this off-ramp for a reason, and the reason was that America couldn't accomplish its mission. So what is he doing? Setting himself up to do what—accomplish a mission we already know we can't accomplish? No, he wants a peace deal. But it has to be a peace deal that's politically viable for him.

He sent J.D. Vance to Islamabad together with, you know, Kushner and Witkoff. They were this close to a final deal—this close. The Iranians came loaded for bear. They came with all the documents, all the facts, the whole thing, and they were this close to nailing down a deal. Why? Because Iran holds all the cards—all the cards. But the problem is, if the United States accepted the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, it would be clear that the Americans were defeated. And that's politically unacceptable for Trump. So Trump scuttled the negotiations, sent the high-profile teams back to their respective countries, and then started playing stupid games—you know, bluster, blockade, this, that, the other thing. Meanwhile, the negotiations are still taking place.

I don't think many people realize that, but the United States left a big technical team, and the Iranians left a big technical team, and they're working out all the details to finalize the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding. At the appropriate time, Trump will come in, and once he's created the perception that his intervention made this deal possible, he'll implement it. And that's where we are. Everything else is just gamesmanship—everything else is just theater. You know, Lebanon's an interesting issue because the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict isn't an extension of the Israeli-Iranian conflict.

The Israeli-Hezbollah conflict exists because Israel occupies Lebanon. That's it. If Israel stops occupying Lebanon, Hezbollah goes away. It's not an issue. So, you know, that's always going to be a more nuanced, difficult problem that's not going to be resolved as part of this comprehensive peace plan. There needed to be a ceasefire. But, you know, I don't believe the deal that's going to be cut in Islamabad is going to solve the Lebanese problem. It'll leave the door open for a solution to be figured out later. But at some point, Israel and Hezbollah are going to keep going at it because the Lebanese government has sold out to Israel.

As long as Israel continues to occupy southern Lebanon, it will be resisted, and that conflict will never end until Israel is evicted from southern Lebanon. Iran will continue to support Hezbollah, and that's just the reality of it. That'll be its own little war on Ansarallah. Look, Ansarallah is getting

ready to shut down the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. If they do that, it's a death sentence for Saudi Arabia's energy-based economy, which has diverted the bulk of its oil export capacity from the east to the west through a pipeline. I think this one's readily resolved. I think this one is directly linked to the termination of this. But, you know, Ansarallah will always loom until there's a solution to Israel-Gaza. So, you know, there are going to be some unresolved issues once the basic U.S.-Iranian conflict ends.

But the important thing for the Iranians—and this is what people need to understand—is that I keep hearing people say, "Why would Iran do this? Why would Iran agree to this? They've got them by the balls. Why not just keep squeezing them, man?" Look, the guys saying "they've got them by the balls, keep squeezing" are the ones sitting safely at their desks at home, not having to worry about anything. But if you're an Iranian who's lived for five decades in an economy constrained by sanctions—an economy that's never been able to live up to its potential, with Security Council resolutions plastered on, IAEA resolutions plastered on, unable to effectively engage with BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or invest in the Eurasian Economic Union—then it's a different story.

I mean, all these things—and suddenly you have the possibility where all sanctions are going to be lifted. No more constraints. You're in total control of your economy, control of your economic future, who you do business with, how you do business. Suddenly, the Iranian government can deliver on five decades of promises to the Iranian people for a better life. Do you guys maybe understand now why Iran might say, "I'll let go of their balls"? Because Iran doesn't exist to squeeze the balls of the West; Iran exists to do right by the Iranian people. And now there's a chance for that to happen. So this is a huge opportunity.

#Danny

Yeah, and that's sad. You mentioned those resistance fronts too. Iran will achieve all this without, you know—contrary to what some believe or what I've even gotten messages about—they've done this all without abandoning those resistance fronts. In fact, even if these problems aren't resolved, which they can't be—you're exactly right, they can't be resolved—Israel is Israel, and it's going to continue to try to terrorize, to occupy, and to do what it does against Lebanon, Gaza, all of that. It's not going to stop. But at the same time, Iran can achieve this victory and continue to support those fronts.

And it'll make it a lot harder, and the U.S. will look very foolish to try to reverse all of this just because Iran continues to support these fronts. So politically, it's a very interesting moment—and geopolitically—because it signals that, as you said, Iran holds the cards, and those cards kind of exist in perpetuity. It will affect the future of how the U.S., if it continues to want to conduct regime change against Iran—or try to, uh, Israel, all of this—this moment just doesn't go away. There's a foundation here that's very interesting. Your comments on this—I've been thinking about it for a few days.

#Scott Ritter

Yeah, let me jump in on this one because, um, Iran holds the cards right now since we're in a state of conflict. But you understand that the game changes once you de-emphasize the military and start emphasizing the economic side. You know, Iran can't play it both ways. Iran doesn't get to hold the balls and then go play BRICS, you know, as an international economic participant. They're going to have to release that. And when they do, Iran becomes part of the global economy—and that's a whole different game, where different pressures can be applied, different restrictions, and so on. So, what happens when Iran joins BRICS? Now Iran becomes a hostage to Indian-Chinese animosity. They're in the middle of that now; they've got to play that.

You see, the world doesn't become, you know, totally simple for Iran—it becomes far more complicated. In fact, when Iran now has to operate in accordance with the rule books, in accordance with the rules of fair competition, it's a big shift. Iran has been playing the sanctions-violation game for decades. They're used to floating ships out in the open sea, waiting for markets to open up, offloading. They're not going to be doing that anymore. They're going to be part of the free and open economy, and they're going to have to compete. And I think it's going to be great for Iran, but the idea that Iran emerges from this retaining the superiority it's gained through this victory—that's not the case at all, because Iran will have to learn how to live in peace and harmony with its regional neighbors.

It's not going to be able to sit there in a permanent state of conflict, tension, and hostility. And now we come down to the Strait of Hormuz. I think this is going to be fascinating to see how it plays out. I think Iran has earned the right to say that, for a period of time and for security guarantees, it must retain control over the Strait of Hormuz as a way of leveraging everyone to make sure all parties abide by their agreements. But Iran wants to join the family of nations, which means it wants to comply with the rulebook—the United Nations Charter and the foundation of international law derived from it. And part of that is the law of the sea. The Strait of Hormuz is an international waterway, openly recognized as such.

And for Iran to suddenly, unilaterally declare that it's not—that it belongs to them—puts Iran smack dab in violation of international law, where Iran doesn't want to be. So I do think there's going to be some sort of compromise. How they work this out, I don't know. But I could imagine a 10- to 15-year treaty with Iran, the United States, and the Gulf Arab states, where Iran has control but others are involved too, and the money collected would be distributed for reconstruction purposes for a period of time. But like any toll booth linked to the construction of a highway—I'm thinking of the New York State Thruway—you know, once you pay it off, you're supposed to stop collecting tolls.

Of course, New York State will never do that because they always want the money. But the point is, at some point, Iran will have to relinquish control of the Strait of Hormuz back to the international community. That's just a requirement of international law, and Iran is a nation that wants to comply.

So I think there's going to be—uh—there's going to be some compromise there. You know, everybody's saying Iran's going to control this forever. No, they're not. It's impossible for Iran to control it forever. That would create a huge problem for Kuwait, Iraq, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar. None of them are going to allow that to happen.

The United States won't allow that to happen, because that would mean Iran controls the throttle of the global economy. It's unacceptable. But Iran has earned the right to have that control in the near term as a security guarantee, given that the United States and Israel have shown no ability to tell the truth or negotiate in good faith—they act with perfidy in mind. I do think Iran is in a good position to create some sort of treaty-based arrangement that gives them control for security purposes, but that it gets relinquished down the road. It has to, in order for Iran to, you know, conform with international law. I always love when people say, "How can you mention international law?" Hey, you know what?

The guys who say you don't know anything about how the world works—I'm sorry, but I do. I know the United States violates international law on a daily basis. The United States also complies with international law on a daily basis. The entire freaking world operates on the basis of international law every single day. You have no freaking clue what you're talking about. Yes, there are violations, but what do you think makes all this stuff work? When you get on an airplane and fly overseas, what do you think makes that work? What do you think makes banking transactions work? What do you think makes anything work? It's called international law. We don't live in a total wild, wild west zone yet, just because the United States is a rogue actor in certain aspects of it.

The rest of the world complies with it. That's the reality. So all you guys out there talking about it—you don't know what you're talking about. So shut the fuck up, because you're really oversimplifying a very complex legal argument. The world functions on the basis of legal arrangements derived from international law, linked to the United Nations Charter and other international agreements. That's the way the world works. And if you don't get it, then shut up. Stop talking about things you don't know about. When I talk about international law, it's because I know international law. I've been involved in it. I've helped implement it. I know where it's violated, but I also know where it works. It's there. It exists. It hasn't gone away. So knock it off.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, you know, on the question of the Strait of Hormuz and its status, I think there are two competing ideas. Iran and Oman have said that it's largely part of their territorial waters. A lot of the world views it as international waters because of how important it is for global trade. And I could definitely see, Scott, given that this is the framework they're working within—and you brought up the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea—most nations except for the United States have signed on to that. So I could definitely see a scenario in the future where, as things develop, there are security guarantees involved.

I could see Iran actually reaching out to the rest of the region—even those that were hostile to Iran when the U.S. was using them, the Gulf states and so on, as launching pads. But I could see them reaching out and saying, “How do we govern this together?” That gives Iran a lot of leverage, too, because Iran and Oman could both be part of this. It gives them a lot of leeway in how it looks to the international community and also brings an interesting solution to preventing outside aggression from dictating what happens here. It would be a really interesting thing, I think.

#Scott Ritter

It's going to be a treaty. There's going to be a treaty that comes out of this. There has to be a treaty that comes out of this. You know, if you look at the end of the Second World War, the United Nations handed out certain mandates to deal with post-colonial issues. Iran could be given a mandate. There are creative, innovative solutions here that go beyond Iran simply declaring, “We own the Strait of Hormuz,” and Iran and Oman saying, “We jointly own it.” You don't. It's an international waterway. I mean, by law, it's an international waterway. That's just the way it is.

And so there's going to have to be a creative solution here. But I do think Iran has a right to say that, for the foreseeable future, it should be given the ability to shut it down as a security guarantee. You know, there are very few things you can use as a security guarantee against the United States, because we are liars. We negotiate in bad faith. We do. This one—this one hurts. This one we can't control. I mean, we don't have a solution to it. So I think giving Iran the ability to shut it down for a period of time while the chips that have fallen are sorted out from this conflict is okay.

But at some point, you know, if you think about it, BRICS is going to become a bigger player in this. The United Arab Emirates is a member of BRICS, and so is Iran. They're going to have to learn to get along. Saudi Arabia was invited—they may come back in now—because BRICS is the emerging global forum of note. China, Russia, and India are all major players in the energy markets, with China and India in terms of energy coming out. I just think there's a lot more room for a multilateral, treaty-based solution to this problem. I think you're right—there's going to be a creative solution that involves everybody.

#Danny

Yeah. And, uh, Scott, I don't know if you saw—um, in moments like these, we see the full breadth of contradictions and conflict rear their heads, because it's such a decisive moment historically for a war like this. Well, Donald Trump came out during this Strait of Hormuz rollout of the news—Iran was reopening it under conditions—and he said something about NATO. Because I think what we've seen in this is that NATO and the United States have a much bigger rift than some might believe.

He said, “Now that the Strait of Hormuz situation is over, I got a call from NATO asking if we needed help. I told them to stay away unless they just wanted to load up their ships with oil. They were useless when needed—a paper tiger.” What do you make of this rift? This has been going on since

February 28th, when a lot of these European countries refused to endorse the war, which, of course, made Trump very angry. I'm curious about your thoughts on this rift, because it ties directly into the Ukraine conflict, which has seemingly taken a backseat in attention but is still very much ongoing.

#Scott Ritter

Well, this rift dates back to, you know, 2016, before Donald Trump was elected the first time around. He, you know, he belittled NATO. He said they weren't pulling their fair share, that NATO nations needed to pay a greater percentage of their GDP. I think the talk at that time was to bring it up to 2 percent of GDP. Now it's up to five, could go even higher. But it doesn't matter. Trump has never viewed the NATO relationship in terms of, you know, geopolitical stability factors. He's viewed it as a business relationship—a straight-up business relationship. Are you paying your fair share? You know, how can we make money? How can we sell more weapons to you?

Things of this nature. Um, and so there's always been a rift there, because NATO is supposed to be a transatlantic defensive alliance. And NATO has always played a subordinate role to American national security and foreign policy interests. But when Europe and America were largely aligned, being in a subordinate role to a posture you agreed with meant you could pretend you weren't subordinated—that you were equals. But now we have the United States going off in its own direction, and Europe and the United States are totally divergent on many issues. And we just saw that manifested with the situation in the Persian Gulf.

Um, so now it's clear that, from the European perspective, the only way NATO works is if they surrender to the United States and do what the U.S. wants—which they're not willing to do. And from the American perspective, it's now a bad business deal. You know, we're not getting anything out of it that we want. Ukraine has cost us a lot of money with no discernible benefits. I just think, as a business relationship—which is what Trump has made NATO—it's a failed business, and Trump is looking to cash out. The difference this time is that, in the past, Congress has always said, "You've got to go through us," which he has to.

And, you know, Congress wasn't going to support that. I think right now there are a lot of people in Congress who are bitter about how NATO has behaved. The other difference now is that, in the past, NATO was willing to do what it took to keep the United States in. And now you have the Europeans meeting, saying, "We recognize the inevitability of the American divorce. What do we need to do to have a Europe-only security framework?" So I think the politics of divorce are far different today than they were in 2016. And I think we're looking at a real possibility of the United States leaving NATO, either partially or in totality, as early as this summer.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah. It seems like things are really falling apart for this united, collective Western front that's been going on for many decades now. But, you know, I'm really curious about your thoughts on this.

In the coming days, we're going to see the United States and Iran, through these talks, likely come out with some kind of deal. I'm curious—do you think there's anything surprising we're going to see? You mentioned the memorandum of understanding that's already been on the table, but is there anything that's going to surprise us? Or do you think Trump and the U.S. can find a way to actually reframe the conditions Iran has—which, in terms of a long-lasting end to this conflict, will likely be a requirement for Iran to have in place in order to give them confidence that this won't happen again, or at least not for the foreseeable future?

#Scott Ritter

I think the most important thing for the Iranians is to get all sanctions lifted, to bring the country fully back into the family of nations. At that point, Iran would be sort of liberated to enter into broader security arrangements with both China and Russia. You know, Russia has signed a security framework agreement with Iran, and they're complying with it. But it's very difficult to enter into a broad-based security agreement when you have pre-existing conditions, such as a conflict with the United States. If Russia were to fully embrace Iran, that would mean Russia is now a party to the conflict. So Russia has had to play certain games, and there have been limitations on what Russia can and can't do—or at least what it's willing to do.

And same thing with China. But I think once Iran becomes fully liberated, they'll be able to renegotiate their relationships with both Russia and China. And this is a security guarantee. This strengthens Iran. I think both Russia and China have looked at this conflict and understand the emerging weaknesses of the American position. First of all, China—look, the policy of the United States regarding China, as expressed in the 2025 National Security Strategy, was one where we were going to contain and curtail China, to demonstrate our conventional military overmatch—meaning China didn't stand a snowball's chance in hell of taking us on because we were just so powerful.

That's over. Part of this framework was not only that we would have our own inherent conventional military supremacy over China, but that we were backed by three regional alliances that made it impossible for the Chinese to make a move: the tripartite agreement between the United States, Japan, and South Korea; AUKUS between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States; and then, of course, the Quad involving India, Japan, the United States, and Australia. These three security frameworks, you know, were supposed to hold the Chinese in place. None of them exist—they exist in name only, but they're all dead. The tripartite agreement, you know, the Achilles' heel, of course, is South Korea and Japan's dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

Japan, 93%. South Korea, 43%. Their economies are crashing. Moreover, the security umbrella that was put in place—the security agreement where the United States says, "We're here to back you up"—was linked to ballistic missile defense shields that don't even work. They're the same ones Israel used that failed against Iranian missiles, and the Chinese and North Koreans have missiles just as good or better. Those systems have been stripped away, showing the South Koreans and the

Japanese that they're not a top priority for the United States. They've pulled air defense assets and sent them off to Israel—not even to the Gulf Arab states, but to Israel. So, say goodbye to the tripartite agreement.

Both Japan and South Korea now understand that there's a need to get along with China and North Korea, rather than being positioned to contain them. They don't trust the United States anymore. AUKUS—the United Kingdom is out. They hate the United States right now. Keir Starmer has basically called Trump an enemy of the world. In Australia, you know, they're sitting there saying, "The whole concept of AUKUS was that we were going to get nuclear submarines, which we're not getting right now. And it was supposed to provide for our security—and we're sunk. Thanks to the United States' actions in the Middle East, we have no diesel fuel. We're out."

We have no ability to transport goods. Our stores are bare. We're running out of energy. It's a disaster. So, you know, there goes AUKUS. And the Quad—same thing. Japan, out. Australia, out. India? India is recognizing that it needs to deal with the same economic realities that Iran has to deal with, meaning good, close relations with BRICS; that the United States is the enemy, not the friend; that they need stability—regional stability—and that the United States, as long as it's aligned with Israel, represents the antithesis of that. So the Quad is out. There go America's Pacific dreams. Europe.

We just talked about the collapse of NATO. So when we talk about the future of Iran, Iran is going to be plugging into a new global reality. That means it's not just about a reduced American military presence in the Middle East, but a reduced American military presence everywhere, because America is a power in decline. One of the things this Iran conflict showed is that we're not as strong as we think we are in terms of conventional power. There are limitations, and we've been building on legacy capabilities while ignoring advances. The biggest advances we've ignored are in ballistic missiles. We don't have defensive structures capable of successfully protecting ourselves against the most advanced ballistic missile threats in the world.

This is similar to what the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps are facing—that we can't operate on a modern battlefield. If you put the U.S. Army on the battlefield in Ukraine, they'd all be dead in a day because they don't know how to operate in drone warfare. They don't understand the realities of it. Their tactics aren't conducive to survivability in a drone environment. We don't know how to operate drones in depth. We don't know how to operate drones in an integrated environment. This is everything the Ukrainians and the Russians are doing. The Ukrainians sent two small teams to a major NATO exercise and stopped the NATO advance cold—just two little FPV drone teams. They didn't even have all the other drone capabilities layered in.

A Ukrainian anti-ship drone went out to a naval exercise and sank every NATO ship in the exercise without them even realizing it. And the Russians are even better than the Ukrainians in many aspects of drone warfare. So, you know, the United States is a great power that took its eye off the ball. From a military perspective, we've been convincing ourselves that we're a superpower for so

long that when it finally came time to be tested, we found out we're not. And what's going to be needed to fix this problem is almost beyond comprehension in terms of scope and scale. We literally have to redo everything we do—and we're doing this in a political environment where nobody likes to admit failure.

I mean, who's going to stand up and say, "It's my fault that for the last 30 years of my career I've been pursuing the wrong thing"? You know, no one's going to do that. So it's going to take a long time for the United States to fix the problems it has—if it can ever fix them. One of the things about losing a war—and we lost this war, if we can ever admit it—is that there are lessons learned. Maybe we can go back, draw upon those lessons, and make ourselves more efficient militarily. But that's a double-edged sword, because the United States doesn't know how to behave responsibly. I'd like to see us diminish the military aspects of our foreign relations and start emphasizing diplomatic ones. But, you know, we're spending \$1.5 trillion on our military next year, and Marco Rubio has slashed the State Department's budget by 50%. So there we are.

#Danny

Yeah, I mean, I think that's a really important point of emphasis. The lesson here is that what the U.S. has, quote-unquote, invested in as a military power is not only not working, but it's really showing a glaring need for a massive change in how the U.S. behaves around the world. And of course, a change like that would benefit ordinary people in the United States and actually give the country an opportunity to figure out what kind of identity it wants to have in this changing world.

Because I think one of the big lessons here that maybe people underestimated before February 28th was that, you know, whether it's Iran or Russia or China, these countries have certain advantages that make a war, as the U.S. is planning and preparing for, kind of a fool's errand. It just leads to more disasters. It leaves the U.S. even weaker. And that's not something that big business, especially, will survive very long going down this path. It'll be bad for it. So what do you make of this overall lesson in terms of the changing world? We're in a much different world now. Even this last month—six, seven weeks—seems to have changed a lot about how we see it, or how we should see it.

#Scott Ritter

Well, there's the problem: perception creates its own reality. And as I said, in the United States, we're caught up in theater, not reality. We're caught up in the theater of Trump politics. Again, we just have to get down to reality—foundational realities. When we talk about the United States today, we're not talking about a constitutional republic. I mean, anybody who's trapped in the thinking of, you know, "We've got to empower Congress, and we need the courts to become involved in all this kind of stuff"—no, we're past that. We live in a dictatorship. Donald Trump has declared it to be a dictatorship. Donald Trump has declared the Supreme Court doesn't matter, that he can disagree with their decisions and move forward in total disregard. And what can the Supreme Court do?

They can turn to Congress, but Congress has abrogated its responsibilities across the board. When you have a leader like Mike Johnson, who's stopped being the Speaker of the House and started being just a compliant rubber stamp for Donald Trump, that means Congress doesn't exist anymore. There are no checks and balances. We've failed the basic underlying principle of American, democratically and constitutionally based government, which is checks and balances—three separate but equal branches of government. Federalist 51—if you guys want to go read about it—James Madison laid it out in great detail. So we're not there. We are a cult of personality. That's what we are today. We're a nation where one man is out there, and everything's about him.

He doesn't care about the American people. He doesn't care about national security. He doesn't care about anything. He only cares about Donald Trump, and he uses everything to promote the Trump brand. And sadly, a sufficient number of Americans have bought into this, and that's why he's politically empowered. But, you know, when we talk about what needs to be done, we can't be coming up with solutions that are defined by problems premised on the notion of constitutional due process and checks and balances. We're in a new world where we have to talk about a cult of personality and the fact that, with this man, everything revolves around him. And that's what we're talking about right now. The solution to the problem in the Middle East isn't about what's best for regional security or global security.

From the American perspective, the solution is whatever plays best politically for Donald Trump—what positions him to be more politically empowered come summer, moving into the midterm elections. It's about shaping perceptions, because perceptions create their own reality. So it's very difficult to talk about how America is trying to find a solution with the rest of the world. The rest of the world is dealing with real reality. How do we repair the rift in international law that's taken place? People need to remember that this war between the United States, Israel, and Iran is an illegal war of aggression, lacking any legitimacy under international law or under constitutional law in the United States—a pure war of aggression, which is the highest war crime there is.

You know, the world's tried to deal with this—how to repair that. And so the world and the United States aren't even on the same script. We're reading off two totally different scripts, and somehow we've got to bring them together. That's going to be the greatest challenge right now. You said, you know, how are they going to—how is Iran going to sell this, and how is the United States going to sell it? Again, we're speaking to two completely different audiences. And I guess the only way this works is if Trump just focuses solely on his narrative and ignores the fact that much of what he's saying can be contradicted by reality, because whatever comes out of this peace agreement is going to play primarily to the ten points that Iran has put on the table, not the fifteen points that the United States put on the table.

#Danny

Yeah, those fifteen points that you read—just a lot of the same gobbledygook the Trump administration has been saying about Iran for so long. Some of them don't even have any basis to be negotiated on. So yeah, I totally agree with that. And I guess I'm wondering, Scott, in terms of lessons for the other side—for the multipolar world—I mean, we have Iran, of course, which is in the war directly and has had to fight for its survival, its defense, and its sovereignty, etc.

So there are a lot of lessons there for Iran to learn and take away, especially being on the winning side, as you said. But then there's Russia, there's China, and really the rest of the family of nations moving in this direction—for more sovereignty, for maybe a world where the dollar is no longer dominant, and for more freedom to develop independently and without fear of aggression. What lessons does the world on this side of the aisle take from what's happened here, and what might be expected to happen in the coming days?

#Scott Ritter

Let's look at China. You're in China right now. China's vulnerability to global energy markets has been exposed. China's economy is at risk right now. If this embargo—if this inability to get oil flowing freely from Iran and the Middle East—continues, China's economic growth is threatened. So this is a big vulnerability that's been exposed. The other vulnerability that's been exposed is that there's no replacement for the petrodollar. I mean, that's just a reality. People keep talking about, "Well, we're going to sell it in yuan." Does China have yuan printing presses out there right now just banging away? The foundation of the Chinese currency isn't built on the same base as the petrodollar, and the Chinese aren't ready to make that leap yet either. So—

#Danny

I think what we're seeing is that, you know, they don't want to make it. It would be deconstructing currency from the real economy, and they don't want to do that.

#Scott Ritter

Correct. And so, for all the people saying we're going to get rid of the petrol—no, we're not. Not for now, because there's no replacement for it. None. The petrodollar is there because the petrodollar is convenient. We just have to get the United States to start playing a little bit. Scott is wrong on this. I always love when people say that—"And you're so fucking right." No, I'm right on this. There is no replacement for the petrodollar. China has severe energy vulnerabilities that have been exposed from this. But other things have emerged, too, at the same time. You heard about the major automobile industrialists from Europe and the United States who recently toured China and came back with the report they made.

They said, "We'll never be able to compete with China. We'll never be able to compete with China." China has perfected the art of innovative, responsive, robotic-based mass production. As the Chinese come up with new concepts, they can instantly program them in and adapt. A car line can be changed mid-production as improvements come up. They're outproducing the world, and the inefficiencies of the West—Europe and the United States—are so obvious that we're never going to catch up. I mean, this is a new reality right now too: the supremacy—not just superiority, but supremacy—of the Chinese model of industrialism is clear.

Now, China has to be careful because, you know, they still have supply chain vulnerabilities. And as I said, we just found out that if we shut down the Strait of Hormuz, China's got problems until it gets more oil flow from Russia. There's talk about increased pipelines, et cetera. But I think this war has brought a lot of clarity to China—to the global reality of where weaknesses are, where strengths are. I think what we've found is that the world is far more vulnerable than we like to admit. I mean, we always knew it, but the world pretended it wasn't. You know, Danny, we've had this conversation.

You know, everybody's threatened about it. What happens when the Strait of Hormuz—remember before the war started? The Iranians were going to shut down the Strait of Hormuz. Then, if there's a war, they're going to strike all the oil fields. Oil's going to jump to 200 bucks a barrel. That'll be the end of the world. And we said that till we were blue in the face. Everybody went, "Nah, it isn't going to happen." It happened. It happened. And it's real. And what we're finding out is nobody was ready for this. The Chinese weren't ready for this. And so I think you're going to see a change in Chinese foreign policy—national security policy. You know, nobody likes to have this big a vulnerability.

So I think you're going to see China altering its approach to energy security—making sure they don't have, you know, single points of vulnerability like they do with the Strait of Hormuz. But I also think you're going to see China move to transition away from military confrontation toward economic competition. It's in China's interest to do that as well because they're so dominant. They're just so dominant. I mean, I wish I had gone on that tour or could have seen what these guys said, but these CEOs were shocked—shocked—at just how good China is and how bad we are, because we're still—I mean, no offense to labor unions in America—but your union is the most inefficient capitalist tool ever.

Your union is designed to be inefficient. And as a result, China, which doesn't have a union, is kicking our ass. Your union won't allow us to replace the inefficient worker with an efficient robot. So we're trapped in a legacy model that actually goes back to the 1930s. And China's just out there, you know, legacy, just rolling ahead. I'm not picking on unions; I'm just saying this is a reality—that we have a different, you know, social, uh, you know, contract with our people. And it's holding us back. It's holding us back. That's it.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah. Well, uh, there is something very archaic about the U.S.—what I would call the race to the bottom, deindustrialization, that kind of thing—which leads to unions, especially the few that still exist, wanting to hold on to whatever they have. And the companies, they're not really looking to innovate; they're just looking to make more money. And when they just want to make more money, they replace workers with machines that may be more efficient, but they're more efficient at making money rather than at competing and building products and all that.

And so when I'm in China, you know, I was just—I'm going to have videos and stuff about this later on when I can. I don't want to put them on stream because it's high bandwidth. But, you know, I just visited Ant Group, which is Alibaba and Alipay and all that, and then two companies that produce robots and all these things that the United States is very far behind on. But I think for China, with the energy question, people I've spoken to—John Weiwei and others—they say it's not energy security internally that's really the big issue, because China has done a really good job on that.

But China has a vision of the world that's different from the United States, and it does require stability. Even in energy markets, it really depends on stability, because China wants its excess production to be useful to others—it has excess production now, and it wants that to benefit others. That's why there's the Belt and Road Initiative and all of that. And that will require, short of being able to infuse the world with renewable energy—which it can do, but not replace oil overnight—working with these oil-rich countries across the Middle East. They need to be a big part of what's going to be built in West Asia and Eurasia in general.

So yes, a war like this in that area, with the Strait of Hormuz being choked, that's not going to serve anyone's interests. That would make it a lot harder for that to happen. And that's really where China's economic problems would come in. Yeah, China wants its excess production to be of use—not outsourcing it the way we do, to low-tax havens and low-wage regions. No, they want it to be used by others, to create more money-making opportunities, and those are in capital-intensive areas. That's really where the dangers are here, because, yeah, a major war that lasts months and months, maybe years, like a lot of U.S. wars do, destabilizes energy markets—it hurts everybody.

And it would start hurting everybody in the long, long, long term, despite the advantages of, let's say, a Russia with all its oil, a China with all its production, and an Iran with all its, you know, sovereignty and fierce determination to defend its independence. But the economic situation will cause suffering for most of the world, and that doesn't benefit a project that's meant to make the world better. So that's where I feel a lot of the contradictions lie. But Scott, any final comments on this? Anything else you haven't talked about? No, I mean, we—it's a...

#Scott Ritter

I write for a group called Energy Intelligence. It's an energy publishing consortium. Twice a month, I'm supposed to produce an article for what they call the WIO—the World Energy Opinion page. And

for the last week, I've been supposed to write about this ceasefire, but I can't, because it's a moving target. I mean, I'm afraid, you know, because you're supposed to write something that can at least engage an audience for a week. It's okay to write something that doesn't have the world change a week later. You can say, well, you read it, you got informed, and as the world changed, at least you understood the foundation of that change. That's okay.

You don't have to predict everything to a T. But again, in this situation, every day is— I mean, I've literally written this article three times, and I'm ready to hit send when I read the headlines and realize they can't publish it because it's already outdated. And so, you know, it's frustrating, but that's the reality we're in collectively. We all try—people watch your show in an effort to become better informed. But, you know, the discussion we're having today is contingent upon one of the most irrational, unstable global leaders in the world, Donald Trump. We're having a conversation based on a Truth Social post he put out an hour ago. When this conversation ends, he may put out another Truth Social post that just blows our minds and goes in the exact opposite direction.

#Danny

Just kidding.

#Scott Ritter

And then, you know, the other thing, too, is that I don't think people understand the global vulnerability that's emerged around energy security and the desperation that exists in many parts of the world. Again, I just point out, you go to Europe today, you've got aircraft at every major airport being taken offline, and they're doing this whole commercial interactivity. In eleven days, that all stops because there's no more aviation fuel. What happens when airplanes stop flying? What happens to the industries? They're already overleveraged with banks. We are closer to global economic collapse than people realize. And that's the danger of this conflict, because there are a lot of emotions involved here.

I mean, everybody wants Iran to stay the course—stay the course, stay the course, hold on. That's bad for Iran, because at some point, when you get global economic collapse, there's no longer an incentive to stop the war. And then Iran will just stay isolated forever. That's not good for Iran, you know. And we also have the pressures brought to bear by this global economic collapse on Donald Trump, because he'll be blamed for it. This is his war, his tar baby. He's got to free himself from it. But, you know, the politics here are such that, at some point, if it becomes so apparent to Donald Trump that he's not going to reverse course, he may decide, "Well, then I have to go full bore on war."

You know, if I can't get peace and convince the American people that I'm the greatest peacemaker that ever walked, and I deserve three Nobel Peace Prizes simultaneously put around my neck—if I'm going to lose the election no matter what because of this—then I might as well double down on

another route and go the war route. Um, so we're not out of the fire yet. We, uh, you know, we knocked down the flames, but we've got some smoldering embers out there, and we need to extinguish them. We're not there yet. It's, uh, we're in a very unstable period in global history now, which sort of makes it fun doing what we do, but also makes it frustrating because you just don't know what's going to happen in the next hour or so—it's changing. There's no foundation of stability upon which decisions are being made. We're dealing with a world that's very much chaotic now.

#Danny

Yeah, I think that's—no, I know that's correct. And the reality bears that out. Scott, I want to make sure everybody knows to go to scottritter.com in the video description after the show. That's where you can find Scott's work and support him, financially and otherwise. Also, make sure you hit the like button before you go. I want to thank all the people who gave super chats as well. Yeah, we didn't even talk about this—Donald Trump says he will not unfreeze Iranian funds and will seize its administration. These are the kinds of contradictory things you always hear from Trump. But again, as Scott said, none of that might matter tomorrow. So thank you for your super chats and everything you've contributed here, and to everyone who watched, the moderators who helped out with the chat—everything. Scott, anything you want to say to the audience before we head out of here?

#Scott Ritter

Just to reiterate, if you go to my Substack, scottritter.com, I just published an article that's basically a report card on the trip I just made to Russia. The trip was made possible by the generous donations of audiences like yours, so I'm telling you how I spent your money. And I'm also putting you on notice that in June, I'm going back. I call it the "Revenge Tour," because in 2024 I was supposed to speak at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, but the State Department pulled my passport. This year, I'm going to speak at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum and fulfill that mission.

And then I'm going to go on a 20-day trip somewhere that's going to be pretty cool. But I'll be asking for continued support, because independent journalism doesn't happen unless you're truly independent. It would be very easy for me to go out and get sponsors, but then you become beholden to those sponsors. The only way to do independent journalism is to be beholden to nobody, and that can only happen through generous donations. So if people are inclined to support this work, please go to scottritter.com and read the report card. If you think I get a passing grade, then maybe continue to support. But I thank everybody for the support they've provided.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah, definitely. Uh, and I'm here in China, and there'll be videos with Zhang Weiwei—I live-streamed from here with him—and there'll be more, too. But it's all because of support from this

audience, so, uh, make sure you take heed. That's why I'm here, that's how I can get here, afford these tickets—which are not cheap anymore. Not cheap now, oh my gosh, plane tickets are rough. So yeah, definitely, everything Scott said—take heed to it. Thanks for watching, everybody. Hit the like button before you go. Scott Ritter's Substack will be in the description, and all the places to support this channel there, too. See you again next time. Bye-bye.