

# Iran DESTROYS US Navy Blockade, Trump Desperate for Deal NOW | Sharmine Narwarni

Sharmine Narwani of The Cradle joins the show to discuss the major moves Iran has made to break the US Naval blockade and how it has rebuffed Trump's negotiations fantasy plus much more in geopolitics! Subscribe to The Cradle: <https://thecradle.co/> <https://www.youtube.com/@UC2liaNc5y50YBVjgXiQxdHQ> LIKE the video and Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong> SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: <https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong> #iran #trump #israel Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong> Telegram: <https://t.me/DannyHaiphong> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong> Substack: [chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com](https://chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com) Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritho>

## #Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. It's Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I'm joined by Charmaine Arwani of The Cradle, editor and columnist. Charmaine, good to see you again.

## #Sharmine Narwarni

It's lovely to see you too. How are you doing?

## #Danny

I'm doing all right. I'm here in Changsha, China right now, having a good time. Very jet-lagged, but continuing, of course, to follow what's going on in the world as things rapidly change. So thanks so much for joining me to do that today. Everyone, hit the like button — of course, that helps boost the show. And we're just going to get started right away. Charmaine, let's begin with the blockade. The Cradle posted — your Cradle — posted that Iranian oil exports remain high despite the blockade, that April 2026 crude is being reported elevated out of Iran, exports out of Iran despite this blockade. We also have reports about a shadow fleet of over 20 vessels, 26 bypassing the blockade over the last week.

And of course, we also have the United States seizing now, I think, its second ship in a huge act — a huge act of provocation. But still, many people are talking about Iran being able to break this blockade over the course of the last several days to a week, as the Trump administration blows very

hard about talks of obliteration, about not wanting to extend the ceasefire. So I just want to begin, Charmaine, with your reactions to this moment, given these developments and given how this blockade continues to cause many problems, not just for any kind of hopes for settlement, but also in the fact that it feels like the United States is not really gaining much from this, or at least much of the gain is in the provocation. So your thoughts on all of it.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

You know, I mean, seizing a ship is obviously illegal, as is the U.S. war in Iran. There are so many aspects of this that are illegal that there's just no—you know, you can't rationalize why this happened today. I imagine it happened today because of Trump's sort of maximalist attitude toward everything, right? His, you know, lead-with-a-threat attitude. And of course, maybe even more so because there is no indication yet that any of the Iranian negotiating team, even their forward team, has left Iran for Islamabad. And don't forget, tomorrow is D-Day. Tomorrow is the final day of the temporary ceasefire that was meant to make space for negotiations, which were based on Iran's ten points and accepted by the U.S. as such. And the U.S. seems to have dialed back on most of these and introduced—you know, again, no rationalizing this behavior. So I imagine this is why they boarded another vessel.

It seems like the one they shot the engine room out of and have in their possession now was not enough. They needed to go big or go home. And maybe that's why they're doing this on the eve of the last day. I don't think this is likely to drag the Iranians to Islamabad if there are legitimate reasons not to go, because the Americans have reneged on everything, essentially, or rewritten the terms that they had loosely agreed on two weeks ago. So I think this is why we're in the situation we are in now. Of course, the two weeks have given a lot of Americans, I think, food for thought. Right? What is our president doing? Why is he flip-flopping? Not just every day, but every hour. And yeah, I mean, we kind of have to just watch the clock on this one, because in fact, by the end of tomorrow, Wednesday, there will either be a deal or the war is potentially back on again.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, maybe talk about this notion of dragging Iran to Islamabad, this need to do that. These are supposed to be negotiations, so ostensibly these two sides are supposed to be talking, but this approach that the Trump administration is taking in terms of this blockade has been explicitly said to be almost like calling Iran's bluff on the control of the Strait of Hormuz and forcing Iran to capitulate. But have you seen signs of this capitulation? I mean, there is a ceasefire. We've been in a ceasefire. But this Navy blockade has essentially been going on almost ever since this time. And I'm wondering if you've seen signs of capitulation and what you make of this strategy, for lack of a better word, of trying to push Iran to Islamabad on terms favorable to the United States.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

So there are a couple of things. Before this, the war started in February, there were already ongoing negotiations between Tehran and Washington. And those had, according to the Omani foreign minister, really sort of—they had essentially agreed on all points. Okay, like this was as done a deal, and it was great terms that the Americans would have appreciated. And then the war happened. So it's extremely unlikely, and I know some Iranian commentators have said this, but I have to repeat it. It's extremely unlikely that what Iran was prepared to give the United States on February 27th will be anything like what Iran will be prepared to give the United States today.

Because on February 27th, it was, you know, Iran didn't have any leverage in its hand in particular. The only leverage was like, well, do you really want to get into a war with us, right? Having experienced one last June and seeing that your erstwhile ally, Israel, needed it over almost as soon as it began, right? This time, Iran has far more leverage. It's waged a war for almost 40 days. The Americans have been surprised, and regional players have been surprised at many turns of this war, that not only has Iran persevered and managed to ensure that neither the Americans nor Israelis were able to attain a single goal.

Don't forget, Iran wages its wars against a superpower like the United States asymmetrically, so its goal at the onset is not to defeat America, but to prevent it from achieving any of its goals. And then, of course, you know, sort of trying to establish some kind of deterrence, you know, hitting them badly enough that they never want to do this again. So why would Iran even consider giving the United States what it was prepared to give them on February 27th? That deal on February 27th that was on the table and almost done, from what we understand, was one to prevent war. And the U.S. went ahead and waged war. It destroyed a lot of Iranian civilian infrastructure.

It has killed over 3,000 Iranians now and has caused, you know, regional damage, right? And so, of course, it's not going to get the same deal. So the Americans will go in, someone like Trump, a businessman, will be like, well, they were going to give us these terms before, so those are the same ones we can get today, right? That's not how it's going to work with the Iranians. And there's no waffling on this. I mean, there is a decision-making body that... there aren't personalities who decide this. This is another thing that's been really nasty that the Americans have done in these two weeks of cessation of hostilities, is they have really pushed forth this narrative that you have elements at the top of the Iranian political-military hierarchy who are at great odds with each other. And that's simply not true.

That's not at all true. Now, not to say that there aren't people in the IRGC or in the Foreign Ministry or in the Supreme National Security Council who don't think alike. Of course they don't. This is normal for any country. You'll have people debating things from their point of view, and they have reasons why they think their point of view will work and why their colleague's point of view won't. But the thing is, everything is decided on by consensus. It is decided upon by the Supreme National Security Council, which was set up, by the way, after the June war last year, and whose head was

assassinated by the Americans and Israelis, Ali Larijani, if you remember. And so, you know, the Iranians have been watching — not only did the Americans break their promises on Lebanon, a ceasefire in Lebanon, but right out of the gate, right?

But they also did not stop their blockade of Hormuz. Um, and then they've been trying to sort of sow discord among Iranians — among not just Iranian officials but the Iranian population — which is basically like, you know, the foreign minister wants negotiations and is ready to concede more, but the hardline IRGC is not. That's not at all how it works. They may have different opinions on things, but everything is arrived at by consensus before any of these talks are held. You know, so yeah, I mean, I think this is where we're at right now, and to be honest, I'm kind of like excited, slightly, Danny, to see if the American team continues to sit in Islamabad till the deadline, through today till tomorrow, and the Iranians just don't show up. I'm just wondering if anyone has ever done that to the United States of America anywhere, you know?

## **#Danny**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, the United States doesn't often engage in talks like this that have such consequence. Usually, the United States is not one to engage in legitimate peace talks. And when they do, they assume that they're in a position of strength. So, I mean, this is, yeah, this would be essentially standing up the so-called negotiations team of the United States, which, as Iran has made so many times clear, it does not really want to talk to the Kushners, the Wyckoffs of the Trump administration. They said they would tolerate J.D. Vance, but really it's after that.

I mean, essentially because J.D. Vance is the only one left to talk to outside of Trump. So yeah, it is very interesting that we are kind of, you know, counting down now toward the end of the ceasefire. And there's this dynamic, Sharmi, I wanted to ask you about that. I read off this notion that Iran's oil exports have increased or are elevated in a time when there's a blockade and there are these high-profile stories coming out. For example, you all report at The Cradle that another ship was seized — a Chinese-linked tanker that Trump has claimed has all, you know, parts for drones — and that, you know, he said something to the effect of, well, China did this.

Well, I guess that's war, and China shouldn't be doing that. But it was a very kind of muted response. What do you make of this dynamic — Iran is still shipping out oil, and every day we kind of see that that's happening, and yet there's a blockade happening, which is creating these, I guess, moments of an attempted expression of U.S. dominance. What is this all about? If the U.S. is running a blockade, why aren't they shutting off Iran's oil exports altogether? Why aren't they doing this even more than just one here and another there in the last couple of days?

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

So the Lloyd's List Intelligence put out a piece today — I think it was today — that at least 26 Iranian shadow fleet vessels have bypassed the U.S. blockade. And I think some of this is Iranian

cargo. I don't know if it's all oil-related, but here's the thing: we knew at the onset of this that the Iranians had something like 150 million barrels of oil out in the open seas around the world, ready for their purchasers in the event that there was a war and it would be dragged on. So they had their supplies there. Now, this particular tanker that was boarded and taken by the Americans happened apparently in the Asia-Pacific area. This, it seems, was a tanker headed for China.

I don't know that it had a country's flag on it. I mean, I think it was part of the shadow fleet. Now, keep in mind that the U.S. has no right to do any of this, right? So U.S. sanctioning a country doesn't mean anyone else has to abide, and it doesn't give the U.S. the right to act outside its own jurisdiction, plain and simple, right? If they're saying Iran can't do what it's doing in the Strait of Hormuz, which is absolutely within Iran's territorial waters, then what right does the United States have to go into the Asia-Pacific and basically seize a tanker that has 2 million barrels of oil and is reportedly heading to China?

That was very brash, if you ask me, if all this checks out. Really? You want to take on China? You know, China has a number of naval vessels, I think it's in the Arabian Sea, that could be brought into play. You know, I don't understand this American escalation at all, to be honest. But yeah, I think, I mean, Iran's strategy of being able, you know, gave itself the ability to sell oil because, you know, not just oil, because Iran's been shipping from its normal channels, right, in the Persian Gulf and Iranian ports.

Those have also gone through the U.S. blockade. But it also has the excess, the surplus, around the global waterways, and it's been able to sell its oil at a premium, right? So there are two aspects of this: Iran has made sure it can sell oil during a protracted war and that it can sell oil at a high enough price. So it's almost like selling oil for four months instead of two, because the price plus the ability to sell it has benefited. So they haven't lost a beat. I was reading today, Danny, that the Russians are reducing production. We're not paying enough attention to what's happening in the Ukraine-Russia theater, because there are a lot of things that are being hit to impede Russia's ability to move its energy resources and make energy sales.

There are almost too many things happening right now. So this war in the Persian Gulf area, right? And then hitting Russian pipelines and ports so that the Russians can't put oil on the market. And then since the 1st of March, a series of unexplained and insane fires, explosions at refineries on four or five different continents, okay? So you had, I mean, I think we remember the refinery in Texas. We all wondered early on in the war, could that be an Iranian thing? But no. So several in Texas, in Mexico—I think there are three in Texas, okay? In Russia, in India, several in India, in Australia, Myanmar—I think just yesterday and today in Rajasthan, India, a major refinery was caught on fire.

And it was due to come online, so it was going to be launched. And then in Myanmar, a fuel tanker port explosion. And then in Texas today, an oil well fire blowout, right? There's a lot happening right now that is inexplicable. And then if you don't bring oil to markets, a lot of the U.S. refineries go out of business. Do you know what I'm saying? I haven't pieced together that picture. I just feel like

maybe the goal of this war wasn't just Iran at all. It seems that there's something far bigger and more nefarious. It can't simply be to make the whole world dependent on American oil and shale gas. It can't be, because they don't have enough. But it is about, you know, partly about if we're going down, others are going down too. That is very worrisome. Yeah.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, that's a great point.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

By the way, since you're in China—sorry to interrupt, Danny—but really quickly, the global crisis caused by this war, in being able to obtain fossil fuel energy, has driven a lot of interest in clean energy technologies, and China is a massive beneficiary of this. China's export of batteries, electric vehicles, and solar products shot up in March last month to almost \$22 billion. This is a 70% increase over March of 2023, you know?

## **#Danny**

Yeah, yeah, and if you come here, to the audience as well, it's so apparent that China is more than willing. I mean, first of all, I've been here, I've visited now four cities so far on this trip, and nowhere is there panic about energy. There's no policy—there's no, like, a lot of countries are doing things right now, rationing, price gouging, this kind of thing to mitigate the losses of oil revenue or oil coming into the country, power generation, all that. None of that is happening here, in large part because China was prepared for this.

China is, uh, not only is China the world leader, undisputedly, in both consumption, production, and trade of renewable energy, but it also is prepared on the other front for what is left of its energy stock that is dependent—only 20% dependent—on foreign energy. They have piled up reserves to be able to withstand any kind of shocks to the oil markets. And Iran and this strategy of trying to cut—and I think this is a part of it—cut Iran off from China, uh, it seems that the tankers that they're attacking seem to always be targeting China. Scott Besson talks about China with this blockade, the purpose of it being to cut China off from Iran.

Um, you know, Iran makes up a percentage of that 20%, a good percentage, I believe, of the 20% that it receives from the world. But it's still an amount that is reasonably replaced. And that begs the question then as to exactly what you said. This is about much more than simply regime-changing Iran, which is, of course, a big part of this war. But there are huge global ramifications here, definitely. And it's just interesting that this is the way that the United States is going about it because it neither has the force behind it nor the effectiveness nor even the technical and military might behind it to effect the change that they want to see, which is, I think, notable.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

Or the money. You know, I mean, if the U.S. was going to pick a time to do this, to disrupt rising Eurasian powers, they should have done it when they were standing on much stronger and more solid foundations. You know, I tell you, like... I do think a lot of this is to disrupt the BRI—not the BRI specifically, because now you have the Arctic route because of melting ice caps. The Russians, who have the world's best icebreakers, maybe the only ones, have this alternative route to Europe from Asia-Pacific. And then you have the BRI, and those have hit some hiccups where the U.S. has been able to twist arms, but not enough, certainly. And then you have the International North-South Transportation Corridor, whose principal sort of investors and partners are the Russians, the Iranians, and the Indians.

And the Indians are playing this very badly if they want to beat China in Asia by sort of undermining their two partners and the only major artery that they have going on in Asia. So I think disruption of those things, disruption of supply chains for their adversaries, but it's kind of like taking a machine gun approach to their problem instead of a sniper approach. Do you know what I mean? I mean, it's all just pouring out. And I mean, nobody—if anyone had any doubts about who bombed Nord Stream, the major Russian-German pipeline, Nord Stream 2, that was about to go live—I don't think anyone has any doubt today because we're seeing these kinds of explosions happening everywhere.

If the Americans want to be so brazen as to draw China into it, I don't think China's going to give them the response they want. Not to say that the Chinese will not engage militarily somehow. I don't think in a hot conflict scenario, but they can certainly send their naval ships right to these contested waters and sort of protect shipping. The other thing they can do is—and we're going to have a piece on this by Chinese author Cynthia Chung coming up either this week or early next—on how China is accelerating the shift in global payment systems and why this crisis has helped that along so much.

I don't know if you know about this, but I think just a week, 10 days ago, the Chinese government issued a set of directives, like new laws, new rules, that basically addressed that if anyone harmed the national security interests and economic interests of China, these new rules would allow China to immediately go into action and confiscate, seize, et cetera—reciprocity, if you would. And I think they did that in preparation for what they imagined happening in this battlefield in the region. So maybe the confiscation of 2 million barrels of oil destined for China will be played out in a much different way than the Americans expect.

## **#Danny**

And I don't know what Trump's thinking.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

He's heading over there next month, you know, and he thinks Xi Jinping is going to give him a big fat hug, is what the guy thinks he's going to get. Yeah, right. So, I mean, I don't know. And I don't know if you saw that Wall Street Journal—was it a Wall Street Journal piece on how Trump's making decisions, these sort of inner workings of things, and how they're keeping him out of situation rooms because he's so erratic and impulsive? And this kind of thing is, I mean, it's frightening that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—was it, right, Kaine? I'm mixing them up now.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, Dan Rains Kane, I believe his name is.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

Yeah, like walked out of the meeting because Trump wanted the nuclear codes. But I mean, this isn't like just, you know, alternative media writing it. This is the Wall Street Journal. So I think there's a lot of concern about Trump and how he's acting, how he's alienating staunch allies, not just in the Persian Gulf, which we should discuss, really, but definitely in Europe too. We now have, I think, four or five countries that have joined Spain and Ireland's desire to cut off the special trade relations they have with Israel. There's a lot of kinetic action happening. And if we sat here for the next 10 hours, Danny, we wouldn't touch upon even the stories that are emerging today.

And they're all so significant. All these things tie in to what's happening around the world. You know, policies are now, you know, for instance, if there was a ceasefire deal struck tomorrow, right on D-Day, you still wouldn't get for months what you need throughout Europe, throughout the Far East, right? You just simply—it's not possible to bring the oil and gas online and transport it. It doesn't just start up tomorrow, okay? I mean, so if a ceasefire deal was signed tomorrow, you would have shortages running well into June and possibly even further. I mean, we've never seen any supply outage of this kind in history. There's no example. There's no playbook for this.

Okay, so the tankers, the insurance, the whole process of getting there, and it's what really needs to be explained to some gung-ho Americans who want to go back to war with Iran, thinking that the US and Israel have replenished their weapons in two weeks. They simply cannot do that. They do not have the manufacturing, the production capacity for any of that, okay? If you look at how long it took between the June war and the February 28th war, you see how long it took for Israel to replenish, all right? What, eight months? In two weeks, they're not replenishing anything of worth. But what it's done, I think, for... I don't know if this is true. It's my sense, Danny, that if... I don't think the Iranians would do a ceasefire again like this, okay? I think if there was any other potential deal, it would happen during a hot war.

There is some concept, obviously, in the minds of, you know, those immersed in the Washington bubble that by halting the war they forgot about all the stuff that went on before it, right? The

almost 40 days of what Iran did, and they know it hasn't shown its hand yet, you know, militarily. So it felt like they forgot that and they just started, you know, the discussions where they were with Iran, as it was on February 27th, with the exception of the Strait of Hormuz. That was now thrown in, right? But that's not how it is. And I think maybe some of the Iranians have seen that this has given them a respite to sort of, like, you know, work on their narratives again, to be honest, right? I don't see this happening again. If there's no ceasefire this time and the war's back on, I don't see that you would have a ceasefire unless a deal was essentially signed off on.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, no, those are all great points. And, uh, to the oil situation that you were outlining, one of the theories I've heard about why the United States—and some people have suspected Israel, especially around the sabotage—there's been a lot of actual sabotage happening, even outside of Iran's retaliation, legitimate retaliation, legal retaliation in the laws of war, to the U.S. and Israeli attacks that targeted energy. But there were also acts of sabotage in places like Saudi Arabia. Kuwait also experienced this and is now declaring force majeure on a lot of its deals. But with this, there have been theories that a lot of the U.S.'s foreign policy—and of course Israel behind it and pushing too—has been to try to cut off China from oil markets, to try to force China to buy from the United States.

So, you know, weaken Russia's ability through the attack on shadow fleet tankers, all this attack on Iran, you know, blockade there in the Persian Gulf area, uh, in order to, uh, try to cut off China from Iran and Venezuela. Of course, we know what happened in Venezuela—the kidnapping operation, the attempt to seize and control its oil. So all of this, that's what we're being told. But the problem is, Charmaine, is that, uh, China is not really interested in buying really expensive oil from the United States. Actually, much of the world does not love that—does not love the idea of oil becoming more expensive for them just by buying from the United States.

And this is not to mention that all of these activities, especially the Iran war, have raised the cost of oil, and, uh, that's going to inherently happen if the U.S. is actually attempting to achieve some kind of gas and oil dominance in the world—an unfettered monopoly, so to speak. What do monopolies do? They raise prices. So China's not going to go for that. And I don't know if there's some kind of calculation where the U.S. thinks that China and countries, you know, especially China, will just say, OK, we'll buy your oil now just because you've been harassing and trying to stop us from buying others' oil. But I'm wondering what you think about this.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

No, that's a very 20th-century expectation. We're now in a global war for hegemony—well, for some it's for hegemony, to maintain or expand it. And for others, it's literally to have freedom of movement, of independence, of making one's sovereignty. Sovereignty is back on the map. You know, I think a lot of people—I hear people calling themselves sovereign, sovereignists, whatever—now, because that's actually what people are. You know, there's no left, leftist, right wing, any of

this. Right now, we want to be sovereign. We want to ensure—I mean, I think a lot of governments are having to tend to the needs of their population in a way they haven't for some time—and basic goods and services are obviously front and center.

So I think, you know, the world's going to change a lot, and it's not going to all turn to buy monopolistic U.S. oil and shale gas. It's just simply not going to happen. I don't even know how to explain this because it's so weird to me that Americans actually can even think that's on the agenda, because have they not noticed this multipolar world developing under their noses? Have they not noticed that there are countries in Africa, which they neglect massively, right, that are doing things that they haven't done for decades, okay? Kicking out foreign forces, shutting down their military bases, creating production capabilities in their countries that didn't exist before.

Farming tomatoes that they imported before. Nigeria, a major oil-producing country, finally opening its own mega refinery that actually works, right? And it's the biggest oil refinery of its kind in the world. And for the first time, instead of Nigeria sending its oil to the United States to be refined, then buying it back at exorbitant prices, the Americans are selling oil to be refined in Nigeria. You know, there's almost too many little changes to name. And, you know, I think the Americans have lost the ability to analyze based on—I don't know what—State Department cables from 180, 190 countries around the world are coming to Washington or if anyone's reading them.

You know, people who are looking at the inner workings and developments in all of these states—is anyone even looking at them, or do they just go into the big foreign policy bin, you know, in D.C.? But there's kinetic stuff happening everywhere right now. Iraq, for instance, okay? So we cover West Asia at The Cradle, so I'll just bring you a little tidbit. The Americans warned that if the umbrella organization of Shia political parties in Iraq, the Coordination Network, brought in Nouri al-Maliki, a former Iraqi prime minister—right, they had their elections, Iraq had their elections in 2025, and they're still trying to decide president and prime minister, et cetera.

They said if they brought in Nouri al-Maliki, you know, all hell would break loose. So it looked last week that Nouri al-Maliki was in fact going to be, and then the Americans—Donald, we heard news yesterday that the Americans decided to freeze sending any of Iraq's oil revenues that, by American authority only, are supposed to come from Iraq. Every time they sell oil to anyone else in the world, it's supposed to be held in one U.S. bank account. This is Iraq's sovereign funds, right? And now the U.S. is saying, we're not gonna send you your money, right? And so now there might be a compromise candidate, we don't know. But here's the thing: by Iran stopping the war, it meant that the multi-front war stopped, right? And that meant that in this space of two weeks, the U.S. and Israel were able to either make gains or hammer at Iran's allies in the region.

Lebanon, as we saw, in 10 minutes, you know, 100 missile hits, right? And then in—excuse me—in Iraq, that momentum that had suddenly been created, Iraqi resistance jumping to the fore. We didn't expect it in this war. And pushing the Americans out, hitting the American embassies and consulates and U.S. military bases, forcing American troops into the Kurdish area. Even, you know,

seeing the Kurds deny Americans their greatest wish, which was to have armed Kurdish separatists sort of flow over the border into Iran and start shooting during this war. They stopped that. All that energy stopped the moment we had this dumb two-week ceasefire where the Americans reverted back to their world: we're the Americans, we're in charge.

We could... No, you know, I think... Whatever happens now, it needs to go till an outcome, till a quantum change is established in this region at least. I mean, you hear, I'm sure, Persian Gulf Arab states complaining about the state of things. Not only did the Americans tell them they were going to attack Iran, right? But they didn't even tell them that they were going to stop attacking Iran—the ceasefire, right? Leaving them to the mercy of whatever Iran wanted to do differently with them. So there are so many components of this. During this war, the confrontation between Turkey and Israel has heightened, right? And this sort of confab of Greece, Cyprus, and Israel versus Turkey has strengthened, at least in Turkey's eyes, right?

What happened with Muslim countries during this? Strangely enough, Turkey got with Pakistan, which is a longtime friend, and with Saudi Arabia, which is not a longtime friend, and with Egypt, which is not a longtime friend. And they have this, like, you know, a conversation, an ongoing structural conversation happening about how regional security should look moving forward. You know, and these guys are probably going to determine it. And you have the Saudis sitting on the fence. Why are they sitting on the fence? Surely they would like to sort of, you know, show their Sunni Muslim might against this country that they've derided for so long—Shia Islam, Persia, right?

But they didn't, because I think they recognized straight off the bat that something was fundamentally gonna change as a result of this, and American security guarantees weren't worth the paper they were written on. That the Americans literally were prioritizing Israel and not their East Asian allies—Japan, Korea—not their Persian Gulf allies, not their European allies. So I just think this needs to go on until all the other states see their games through, see their changes through, and the Americans realize at the end of all of this that they're pretty damn isolated. Nobody wants to do business with them. Or unless someone arrests Trump or hospitalizes him, because I don't know. By the way, do you know if there is any authority that can stop a president from...

**#Danny**

Yeah, I mean... we'll be Googling this.

**#Sharmine Narwarni**

Everyone will be Googling this right after.

**#Danny**

If we're thinking about stopping a president from, let's say, war, I mean, Congress is supposed to be able to do that. Congress can't seem to muster up enough votes to even vote, to even put forward a resolution to begin that process, which isn't necessarily such a cut-and-dry process of, okay, they vote and then they stop it. It would take... there would be many more steps than that, but they can't even get to that because the votes just are not there, and I think that's indicative of a larger problem.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

So, Congress?

## **#Danny**

Congress is the only... Yeah, usually it's Congress that's the only... I mean, the Supreme Court doesn't litigate this. Yeah, it would be Congress that would be responsible for it, and it's supposed to be, and the Trump administration and U.S. presidents are supposed to go to Congress about war. Never really happens in this way because, you know... Well, it has, just not after the...

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

Not after 9/11, you know, that's the thing. Yeah. I wonder, I mean, I guess a lot of people may be waiting for the November elections, in which there will be a different kind of majority in Congress.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, well, it's hard to say, but I wanted to get your take now on these talks because I'm wondering what you believe in terms of the Trump administration and Iran. There's obviously a dynamic at play that is becoming more and more apparent as these talks unfold, continue to occur or not occur as the ceasefire deadline comes. The Trump administration—now, some people might view this as theater, as the Trump administration just trying to put on a face, trying to lull Iran—but the Trump administration right now is putting in a lot of effort to go to Islamabad, to have talks. You know, we could say, okay, they have nothing better to do.

They can waste their time and they can continue on this objective of lulling around asleep, rebuilding, buying time, and building back up military strength. But at the same time, it does feel like there is a desperate need for the Trump administration to have some kind of deal in place, or for many factors that I'd like you to get into if you could. So do you find that these talks are really about the United States being in a kind of desperate position? Or do you find that Iran has played a kind of role in facilitating these talks and then playing a very specific kind of posture that has not really been discussed beyond the rumor mill and whatnot in the mainstream media? But no one's really talking about, well, why is Iran approaching things this way?

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

I think the Trump administration wants this war to stop. Well, I think Trump wants this war to stop. But then every time he edges close, he wants a zero-sum kind of...

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

And that's the problem, because the Americans, like the Israelis, cannot think in terms of anything other than zero-sum. They don't understand the concept of win-win the way Iran does, the way China does, the way Russia does. They don't understand that concept at all. So I think every time he inches towards it, he also has a number of different constituents who are whispering in his ear constantly. And we do recognize that the Israel component is one of those, right? And they absolutely do not want the war to stop, to the extent that they will kill negotiators, potentially, or influential personalities who sway the political system there in order to stop any kind of peaceful outcome. So this is what he's contending with on a daily, hourly basis. So he'd like it to stop, but he wants it to be a zero-sum kind of win. It's all America—America takes everything.

That's not going to be acceptable for the Iranians. They fared so well in this war that U.S. publications are calling Iran the fourth power. And for some reason they should capitulate? No, it's not going to happen. Also consider that because Iran from the outset has—and it's said it countless times—"we've planned for a protracted war," and a protracted war doesn't necessarily mean just months. It could mean years, all right? Which doesn't mean, you know, wars are about bombing each other every single day. They're often about a bunch of battles cobbled together at different times that form the body of a war, right? And so Iran expects a protracted war, so you can guarantee, because ambiguity is the name of their game, right—the chess players of the region—you can guarantee that there are many other military, intelligence, and economic surprises they have in store.

They wouldn't have expended that in 39 days. They simply wouldn't have. So I think it's just maybe been a bit of a learning curve for the Iranians, because don't forget, the only reason they accepted the ceasefire—and that went on until the 11th hour, Danny—was because the Americans capitulated and agreed that all bases for negotiation would be based on Iran's 10 points, and that Lebanon and Iran's entire axis would be included in a ceasefire. That means Israel has to stop, too. What Iran then subsequently learned is that whenever you placate the Americans or put out an olive branch or decide to offer a goodwill gesture, the Americans go straight back into their power bubble, and they can't see the forest for the trees.

I think this is the impression we get from people. You also have to consider in Iran—and we're not just talking about the military brass in Iran by any stretch—we're talking about Iranian civilians who couldn't believe, in those 12 days last June, that Iran stopped the war without a negotiated settlement, just a cessation of fire. And that happened. Everyone stuck to it, right? So that's why the Israelis knew this time they'd have to come in with the Americans and destroy Iran to such an extent

that it was theirs for the taking. Of course, none of that happened. But Iranian civilians, also seeing for the first time in their lifetime—right, half the population is under the age of 35—to then see everything that their government, their military, their Revolutionary Guards, their policymakers have put in place, and being super impressed by it, also want to see this never happen again. And so you do hear from secular Iranians on the street often saying, why did we stop the war?

And I think they are going to be in more of a driver's seat come Wednesday night, because whatever segment of the Supreme National Security Council decided to try this option are probably not going to be—well, they may not be overruled—but I think a lesson has been learned by this body of authority in Iran in these last two weeks. So I think, yeah, the negotiations, what we've seen, the various points back and forth—and don't forget, Danny, we have no way of confirming these, even if you hear them from an Iranian official, right? Well, unless you hear it from the actual two main negotiators at the table. We've all heard a lot of different, I guess, details about what has been agreed to and what has not been, and other things that we're not commonly seeing in the English-language media that have been agreed to that would maybe surprise some people and are outside the nuclear realm, for instance.

So there's no telling, but what seems clear is that the US rhetoric is probably different from what's happening behind closed doors. And I say this for one reason, and one reason only. Because the Pakistani intermediaries have been super active every day up to this moment, and continue to be active. So there are discussions still happening at some level, right? And obviously the intermediaries, they know what the initial promises the Americans made were, and Iran's saying, we're not going to go in different directions from what was agreed on. Let's start with those principles.

And one thing that Iranians have said is that there's nothing on this list, on our lists, okay, of things to negotiate over that is not solvable, okay? This is a really important takeaway for your American viewers. The Iranians have said there's not a single thing there that is not solvable. It depends on how much give and take there is. Obviously, the Americans aren't giving, and we know that because the Iranians have not even got on planes to fly to Islamabad, even though Trump is promising to hit bridges and power plants immediately after.

## **#Danny**

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, this is a, this is a veritable disaster. Uh, it seems, and it just seems like it just keeps getting worse and worse the longer this goes on. Um, and I guess I'm curious, you know, in the last eight minutes or so that we have here, Charmaine, uh, in terms of the larger ramifications of these talks and where they're headed, and, you know, it is a very kind of have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too kind of moment for the United States. It wasn't in the driver's seat going into talks, and now it seems like it's desperately trying to wrestle its way back into some kind of leverage position over Iran. But, you know, it doesn't seem like that is happening.

And so, yeah, I guess I'm curious on your final thoughts here on what exactly we can expect moving forward. It seems like Iran is preparing for a long war, which is why I believe, at least, it has engaged in, for example, ceasefires like the 12-day war, ceasefires like this now. Because I do believe that it is looking at this much further down the road than just what's happening, you know, 40 days in, 50 days in. It's looking at this as maybe a years-long protracted war that has various moments where we have significant escalation, like we saw over five, six weeks or so beginning February 28th.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

The reason why I didn't think this war was going to stop with a ceasefire at this point also is because there's another party to this war that the U.S. has launched on Iran. That's Israel, right? So any ceasefire would have to include Israel also ceasing fire. And Israel is not likely to do that. I mean, during the course of this war, we learned that Ron Dermer, super close advisor to Netanyahu, has offered up a bunch of rules on Lebanon, which is, you know, Zone 1, we get to be in a buffer zone, right? Zone 2, our military gets to be in to help, like, clean out Hezbollah's weapons. Zone 3 is all of the rest of Lebanon, in which the Lebanese army has to do what we say, and we have the right to come in and bomb and do whatever. That's just Lebanon. What about Gaza?

I mean, all of this started over Gaza. What about poor Gaza? What about Iraq? What about Yemen? What about Syria? You think Netanyahu is going to cave on any one of these things, let alone all of them? So how can this war stop, Danny? How? And this is why it's not just down to an Iranian victory, because that's not how asymmetrical warriors and strategists think. They want to deny their adversary their objectives. Although, let's be honest, we still don't know what the U.S. objectives were in this war. They also want to, you know, it's... So I feel like the Western world is sitting on the edge of a cliff in a jalopy. Right? And at the time that it's sitting in such a precarious position, it decides to do crazy things like headbang in the car. You know what I mean? Like, just anything could happen.

And they're doing this at a time which is very foolish for the Americans because there are other global actors that have efficiency, and way more efficiency than any of the Western countries. China can build anything overnight. Guess what? Since the Iran-Iraq war, Iran can build anything overnight. Literally, they would bomb buildings in Tehran — this is in the 1980s — and the next morning you wouldn't see debris. That's how quickly they move. You know the trains, the railroads that the Americans and Israelis hit in this war? They were back online within less than three days, okay? So you have extreme efficiency on the other side. And so whatever the Americans do, they're going to be spending money, they're going to be literally expending all their military supplies. It's not just here.

It's also for Israel. Gulf countries are demanding stuff. The U.S.'s partners in NATO and other countries in the East are demanding stuff. The U.S. has no money. And the U.S. administration, because of Trump, is being alienated. Everybody hates this country right now. And at this time,

they're going to try to keep up with Iran's twists and turns. It's not going to be good. Iran will use this opportunity with its allies, China and Russia, to change all systems that govern the networks in our world — telecommunications, shipping, insurance, finance. All these things are going to happen under the cover of war. And honestly, if it wasn't this war, it would have been the one fought over Taiwan. It's just inevitable. But this was too big a war for the U.S. to handle given its domestic state of affairs today.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, those are more great points, Charmaine, and I think a good place to close on. The one thing I've told my contacts here in China is we are in a moment, from what I can give as a perspective as an American who lives in the United States, who studies government systems, the system of empire, the government that's at the reins of it — what it does, how it works. And now I think we know that the United States is incredibly desperate to do everything that we have covered in this show. It will enter into wars that it not only cannot win, but that are likely to accelerate this process of decline.

But it will, it will push further and further and further. It's not necessarily going to stop or say, "Okay, I give up." It will continue on this process. It will continue targeting. If it was, as you said, it wasn't this war, it was going to be the next war. It's all, you know, we know who the targets are. But, you know, we've weakened — the U.S. has weakened — over the Ukraine war. That took a long time. Why did it take a long time? Was Russia too weak? No, you needed to change people's minds. You know, you needed to...

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

Suck out the, sort of, you know, deplete the militaries of your adversaries, right? And if the Iran war comes, it's a whole different thing. Now you hit the world economy. If the Americans can't even survive past this and go to China, it'll be, you know, the end of it. So yeah. But by the way, you must have been asking people in China, is China going to do more? Have you heard any feedback? I'm curious.

## **#Danny**

Oh, yeah. I mean, the approach to that is China is very—one thing I think for the audience to know about China is that it is not a country that's swayed by external pressures. Like, China has a very tight, disciplined internal system of governance that is led by a very particular party, the Communist Party, but it also has a governance system that has a massive amount of bottom and top interaction that is really focused on China. So when it comes to China's foreign policy, there's no breaking the non-interference policy. There's no—there really isn't a world event that's going to shift China's foreign policy as one that really focuses more on development, focuses more on diplomacy, focuses more on non-interference in the affairs of others.

However, you know, the real focus, I think, especially for media and the context I have, you know, in general, and the academies, etc., it really is about enhancing China's prestige, enhancing China's image in the world because of how it's been dragged by the West, telling China's story. And a lot of its messaging and a lot of how it approaches conflicts like this is sticking to principles. And a lot of the time, at least China believes that's good enough, Chinese people believe that's good enough, that that will affect real change. It has. But doing more would essentially mean that China becomes an active party to war, which Iran hasn't requested. And essentially, China has calculated that this would not really help matters at all, really. So China, you know, China acknowledges its partnership with Iran.

There are different ideologies, of course, among Chinese academics, experts, journalists, everybody. They have different opinions on this, but in the main, everyone believes that it's China's right to supply Iran and trade with Iran with whatever materials, whatever Iran says it needs, and whatever China is willing to give. That's within the rights of those two countries. There's no deviation from that. So, yeah, in terms of doing more, I feel like a lot of that for China is kind of noise from the West, but it really is—this really is a country that just does what it believes is best for China, and also what it believes is best for the world, and best for building stability and peace. And I think that's why we've seen China kind of operate as both a diplomat as well as a very key partner to Iran, which I have mentioned, and I've been asking people about this.

I said, look, Iran, what's really interesting is that China has, especially around the Strait of Hormuz issue, taken this broad-based position that the Strait of Hormuz should be open for the free flow of trade and all of that completely. And at the same time, it has only condemned the U.S. blockade. So this is a very careful and calculated kind of approach where Iran is not being condemned for directing control and asserting authority over the Strait of Hormuz, but the U.S. is being condemned for instituting a blockade, and that is just totally in line with China's policy of not interfering, but also understanding what's actually happening here.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

And lastly, one last thing.

## **#Danny**

No one believes here that the Chinese government pressured Iran into negotiating with Israel. That's all fake news. According to everybody here, and you ask anybody—I talked to Zhang Weiwei, you can listen to the interview—he said no, the Chinese government wouldn't pressure Iran to do anything. Because honestly, China is looking at it as a conflict that really is so existential to China that it feels like it has to violate its own principles to effect, essentially.

## **#Sharmine Narwarni**

But you're—I mean, look, we've seen a Chinese veto, right, over the Strait of Hormuz too, right? So I don't doubt that China will sting when it needs to. And I think we're going to see a bit more of that. These new regulations I was mentioning are part of that preparation for what the American beast will unleash, right? It's not going to stay quiet if it loses in Iran or doesn't fare as well there. But I do feel that while China sticks with this very sort of international law type of foreign policy, like we're going to not interfere in some states, et cetera, the Chinese are very clear on also weakening their adversaries, right?

They will weaken their adversaries. They'll find clever ways to do that, right? Well, what do they say to the Americans? Well, you're going to tariff us? We're not going to give you rare earth minerals. You can't build missiles anymore. Do you know what I mean? It's a slam dunk. So I do expect to see more like that. But, yeah, let's see, Danny. You know, if we're doing this in two weeks, it's going to be a very different kind of podcast, right? Yeah.

## **#Danny**

Totally, totally. I mean, yeah. And in China, I would see exactly what you're saying as simply making decisions, especially on trade, economic development, and of course, relations with other countries, as just simply the best and only choice for its own interests. And that is, I think, a really big takeaway here, which is that China can simply just do what it's doing and respond to these acts of aggression and attempts to manipulate the world order back toward the US's favor, as, you know, it can just simply react in a way that's best for it. And it has huge ramifications for the world because it can weaken the United States simply by making choices that are to the benefit of itself and, of course, will be of benefit to this emerging multipolar world, which China, of course, has been leading and is very interested in ensuring continues to develop and strengthen.

So, Charmaine, I want to make sure that everybody knows that your publication that you edit and you're a columnist for, The Cradle, is in the video description. So people should go follow you there. I believe your social media is also there. I want to thank everyone who gave a super chat today. I really appreciate all of you for doing that. Everyone who watched, all the moderators, of course, who helped with the chat. And, of course, everyone who will watch this video now and later. Hit the like button before you go. That helps boost the show in YouTube's algorithm. And until next time, everybody, Charmaine, thanks so much again as we head out of here. Take care, everybody. Bye-bye.