

Pepe Escobar: Trump's Blockade Just Backfired Disastrously

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Wednesday, April 22nd, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Pepe Escobar, is here with us. Welcome back, man.

#Pepe

Oh, it's a pleasure, Nima. Buddhist salutations to you from the beautiful, still very hot nights of Thailand.

#Nima

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Pepe, let's get started with your new article in which you mentioned that the blockade is going global. We know what the difficulties are, what is happening with the case of the Iranian blockade, which is the United States deciding not to let Iran do anything in or out of the Iranian ports. What is your understanding of the blockade so far, which Donald Trump believes was so successful?

#Pepe

Well, obviously, he has to say it's successful because it was his harebrained idea at the last minute to gain some time, of course. And he needs an off-ramp badly, desperately, desperately. And he has no other cards to play. What is he going to do? A ground invasion? Disaster. A nuke? Well, he tried a nuke, apparently. He was trying to get the nuclear codes, and General Kane said, "Get this guy into the lunatic asylum now." So the only thing left is what else? An act of piracy. And that's exactly how it was interpreted in Tehran. So obviously there could not be any possible Islamabad 2.0. When you impose a completely illegal act, it's not only an act of aggression, it's an act of war.

So what is there to discuss? What we were talking about before we started, what I was discussing with Nima before we started, is how the Iranians run rings around Trump's devastated psyche and his cohorts, grifters, associates, vassals, etc., by playing strategic ambiguity. So they were like, what

are we going to do? We need to do something. So what he did was, okay, we prolong the ceasefire. So prolonging the ceasefire, okay, for how long? And now today, what, two or three hours ago, he comes with apparently a new deadline within the next three to five days.

So he starts saying that maybe on Friday there's a possibility of a meeting, or at the latest Sunday. And now he is giving three to five days as a deadline so the regime in Iran can get their shit together. So this is what I try to explain in my article. These bloody idiots, because they don't have ground intel—and Nima, you know that very, very well—they have no idea how the new system in Iran works. They maybe have a vague idea of the decision-makers, some names, but they don't know what they do. And they don't know how they make their decisions. And obviously, what's the interpretation in American mainstream media?

Ah, there is an enormous split in Iran because all the factions are fighting each other. But only stupid people who have no ground intel, don't know it, never been to Iran, whatever, can say something like this. So in this article, I try to explain how it works. It's a new system compared to, let's say, the pre-war system, where the reformists were—I wouldn't say they were predominant, but they were much more influential than they are now. And the reformists, of course, include President Pezeshkian. Now we have this new—I call it a quartet. Correct me if I'm wrong, Nima.

And the members of the quartet, okay, let's give them their names in detail for all of you: the IRGC chief, Ahmad Vahidi; Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf, who is now, let's say, the face of Iran negotiating; the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Mohammad Zolghadr—he was part of the delegation to Islamabad 1; and the Secretary of the Expediency Council, Mohsen Rezaei, an old, old fox. So, Nima, you agree that these are the four main deciders at the moment, right? But they do not decide everything by themselves. They have to listen to the reformers. They listen to the president, obviously. And, of course, all that is under the authority of Ayatollah Mostafa Khamenei, even if we cannot know where he is for obvious, extremely complex security reasons.

And apparently the communication now is analog—letters, letters going back and forth. So obviously it's a much slower process. But the communication is there. And Ayatollah Mostafa Khamenei, he has the final say. These four of the quartet, of course, they are immensely important. But this doesn't mean that, for instance, Araghchi is marginalized. Can you imagine the stupid American mainstream media saying that Araghchi was put under house arrest? They have no idea what happened. Did you see that, Nima? It's completely absurd. Unbelievable. Unbelievable. Unbelievably stupid, but considering where it comes from, it makes sense, right? So the most important thing is that this new, I would say, security-conscious system is unified. In fact, everybody is thinking along the same lines.

There may be slightly different interpretations of how to proceed next, but they all think alike, and there is strong unity. And this explains why everybody, more or less, from the beginning said, what's the point of going to Islamabad 2.0? There's nothing to discuss, especially now with not only the war, but now an illegal blockade against us—another act of war. So there are two acts of war in

sequence against us. What is there to discuss? So that's the key point. But at least there is, I would say, comic relief in all this story, which is the way the Iranian leaders, let's say the Quartet, and everybody else, including Araghchi, they ran rings around the Americans, and the Americans were discombobulated and didn't know what to do. So now we have a baboon of barbaria saying, okay, they have three or five days, and we're going to have a meeting.

#Nima

No. No.

#Pepe

If the blockade stays, there's no meaning. It's as simple as that. But, Nima, I'd like to hear your insight about that. What Professor Robert Pape said about the escalation trap—I see the escalation trap on both sides, progressing in parallel. Because we have Iranians, for instance, today—they confiscated two MSC vessels. And the day before, the Americans attacked an Iranian vessel, Indo-PACOM, in fact. This is why I start to talk about the global blockade. Because the big, big, big strategic American plan is a global blockade against everybody who is not trading in petrodollars.

So this means the global blockade includes, I guess, the Russians in the Black Sea or in the Baltic Sea, in the Eastern Mediterranean, everywhere. And, of course, against Iran, not only outside the Persian Gulf, because they are cowards. They are not in the Persian Gulf; they are in the southern Indian Ocean, which is very, very far away. But, of course, the Indian Ocean goes all the way to very close to the Strait of Malacca, which is the big prize. The Americans, sooner or later, will try to find a way to close the Strait of Malacca for ships going to China. This is absolutely inevitable.

The Chinese have been gaming this for at least 20 years in detail. It's what the Chinese used to conceptualize as the escape from Malacca. What is the escape from Malacca from a Chinese point of view? Diversify their sources of energy everywhere. So it's the Persian Gulf, but it's also Myanmar, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Russia, you name it. Until a few weeks ago, Venezuela — not anymore. But they diversified since the mid-2000s. So for the past many years, they diversified everywhere. So it is a global blockade. And we're seeing the first steps of the global blockade. So Iran has no illusions, Russia has no illusions, and China has no illusions about that.

#Nima

I think what's going on in terms of the escalation that you've mentioned is that both sides are playing their game. On one side, you see the United States trying to blockade, for example, that Tusca tanker. It was related to China, basically. It was going back to China.

#Pepe

It's not just about—please, go ahead.

#Nima

On the other hand, Pepe, I think we have to see the big picture — how long can they continue with this game? I think when it comes to that concept, Iran has the upper hand, because not only is Iran doing this on its territory — you know, the Strait of Hormuz is part of Iran — they don't have to suffer a lot to keep that strait under control. But the United States came a long way to the, you know, to the Arabian Sea to do this sort of blockade. So who's suffering right now? Today, just moments ago, we've learned that the IRGC Navy targeted a third vessel, Euphoria.

It's close to the UAE. If Iran is not receiving anything from outside, the UAE cannot receive it. Other countries, GCC countries, cannot receive it. Saudi Arabia cannot do anything considering the Red Sea. This is the game that is showing up. And on the other hand, the global economy — just moments ago, we've learned that Lufthansa, the German airline, is reducing 2,000 flights. This is huge for the global economy. And who's gonna survive that? Iran has other options to communicate with the world. It doesn't matter. It's important, by the way — it's putting a lot of pressure on Iran economically right now as we talk — but who's gonna survive this?

I don't see Donald Trump surviving this because Iran is somehow flexing its muscles. It's just finding other ways of communication that they're going to be successful with, in my opinion, in a short period of time. They found how to get out of this sort of American blockade. But what Donald Trump has as an option for him is just one option. There is no backup plan for him. That's why he's trying to do — you know, before this blockade, he was talking about, if the blockade doesn't work, I'm going to attack Iran. Then he backed down and said, no, it's going to be indefinite. And right now he's talking about four or five days. But the other point, Pepe, is that you mentioned three to five days. This is the exact time that the George H.W. Bush aircraft carrier needs to get to the region.

#Pepe

Go ahead. Mm-hmm. Exactly. Absolutely. This new so-called fake deadline is directly linked to the possibility of an attack. There's no question about that. And what sort of attack? It's going to be a shock and awe replay to devastate Iranian civilian infrastructure, like they did in the initial shock and awe in Iraq in 2003. They were attacking essentially Iraqi civilian infrastructure. And so what? Is this going to make Iran blink? No, not at all. It will be, of course, horrible devastation all across Iran, but Iran won't blink. And of course, the response has already been identified. We're going to attack Yanbu, the port in the Red Sea, the terminal of the east-west Saudi pipeline. We're going to attack the Fujairah terminal in the UAE. And, of course, the Bab al-Mandeb will be closed. The Red Sea will be closed. This is, if I remember well, 32% of global oil supply worldwide.

#Pepe

Disappearing like that. And who will be responsible? Not Iran. Who will be the baboon of barbaria? Because this is a war against the global economy. And they think that the U.S. can survive that. So if the Persian Gulf is destroyed, if West Asia is destroyed, if European economies are destroyed, if Asian economies suffer terribly, they don't care. So, uh, that's why this is, uh, people all around, uh, I would say the Global South, but all around the world for that matter, including the Global North, they need to wake up to the fact that this is a war against everybody. It's really the empire of chaos, plunder, lies, and piracy against everybody else.

Of course, the abstinence syndicate, which is part of the whole plan. It's absolutely frightening. We're going to have famines everywhere. We're going to have food riots everywhere. We're going to have, in terms of flying, most flights will be grounded because there won't be any jet fuel left. What Lufthansa did is just the beginning. Maybe, for instance, the Chinese airlines can survive because they have an enormous backup of jet fuel in China. And in fact, they are already, you know, if you are in Europe and you want to go to Asia, the only decent way to do it is to board a Chinese airline.

Forget about the famous stop in the Persian Gulf, which was what everybody was doing. It's over. It's over. So it's just the beginning, Nima. And in the next two weeks, we're going to hit maximum crisis points in all that—fertilizers, jet fuel, you name it. It's in the next two weeks. So the war would have to stop by Friday or by Sunday, according to the Baboon of Barbaria. And even then, it would be an enormous problem. If we have this thing going on for another two weeks, for the global economy, it's going to be a total disaster—an irretrievable total disaster. Just because the men who actually started this war cannot find enough rent.

Because there are no off-ramps. The only real off-ramp would be to say, okay, we suffered a strategic defeat. That's it. No more military bases in West Asia. We're leaving. If he does that, the petrodollar collapses completely. For the moment, the petrodollar is collapsing in slow motion. If he does that, the petrodollar collapses in a matter of weeks or a few months, max. So there are no—it's zugzwang, really. Any move he makes, he's—because he trapped himself. And that's the craziest thing. And because he trapped himself, the rest of the planet has to pay for his cosmic stupidity. That's the essence of the tragedy we're all living.

#Nima

I think he's desperately trying to save face with this war, but Iran is not giving any sort of sign that they're going to help him. That's the problem on his part.

#Pepe

Of course, of course not. He thought that he would have some sort of Delcy Rodríguez inside the Iranian government. There are no Delcys in Tehran. Breaking news.

#Nima

And today he tweeted, Pepe, that Iran is collapsing financially. You know what's so amazing to me? They don't have any sort of—

#Pepe

Sorry, not collapsing financially, but of course it's very hard for Iran. But as you said only a few minutes ago, they can always find ways—barter deals, swaps, exchanges, Islamic banking, you name it. There are so many ways.

#Nima

Because there were moments in the last 46 years, Iran has been under tremendous sanctions from the United States. There were moments that Iran, without having a blockade, was under blockade because of the sanctions. That's why they know how to get out of this, how to deal with these sorts of difficulties that they're facing. And Donald Trump has no idea how these people are familiar with these sorts of extreme experiences, I would say. This is the reality. And they feel that if they continue with this blockade, they're going to bring Iran to its knees. If that was the case, Iran would have been going to Islamabad. Exactly. Iran is sending signs to the United States that it doesn't matter whatever you're trying to do to us. It doesn't matter.

We are deciding about this. This is the sovereignty of Iran. This is the way that Iran thinks. We are going to act based on our calculations, not based on what you're trying to impose on us. This is the message, I think, from the Iranian part. But it doesn't seem that anybody in Washington is capable of understanding the reality of the region. Basically, in each and every area, you see someone like Pete Hegseth that's running the show. I think nobody's trying to... At least there is no connection, no good connection between the reality and the policies in Washington. And who's going to improve that, Pepe? Do you see any sort of sign? Anybody helping Donald Trump, or is he capable of getting any sort of advice from, I don't know, other parties in Washington?

#Pepe

It's impossible. First of all, because he doesn't listen to people who do not say, "Yes, master." Number one. Second, he hates to be contradicted. So he will never follow expert advice from his very, very closed circle of grifters, vassals, sycophants, corrupted people, perverts, whatever. All of the above, in fact. Third, perhaps, and this is an enormous perhaps, deep down he knows that he fucked up. So he's blaming himself face to face with his conscience at three in the morning, of course, never in public. Because he learned from Roy Cohn and grifters of the same ilk, you should never back down. You should never recognize that you made a mistake. Always be on the offense. Always be aggressive. So, you know, his psychological profile is immune to self-reflection.

And to admit your own mistakes. It's a typical trait of psychopaths, sociopaths. He is a psychopath and a sociopath. And now rattled with dementia, the early stages of dementia. And deep inside him,

profound rage. He's a very vengeful person. So put this all together, Nima. Forget about empathy. Forget about self-reflection. Forget about diplomatic overtures. He killed diplomacy completely. You know, in these past two weeks, at least, there were many opportunities where we could have a diplomatic path towards some sort of later-on agreement. But at least, okay, the start of it. The Vietnam War took months to reach a deal. This one could take even years to reach a deal, but you have to start somewhere. With this president, it's absolutely out of the question. Absolutely impossible.

So we keep having these tsunamis of vociferations on social media. It's a president that legislates on social media. How pathetic is that, you know? And obviously with no empathy whatsoever towards anybody, much less the rest of the planet, which is paying for his own stupidity. Everybody is and will continue to pay, even more. It's, well, if there will be a historic example of how one fateful decision is capable of turning the whole planet upside down, as it stands in the early 21st century, that's it. It's right in front of us. And we are all victims. We are all hostages of this situation. So, coming back to the nitty-gritty, Nima. This fake ceasefire is not going to last long. No. It will collapse sooner, I would say sooner rather than later. It could be anything. Because now we have two parallel escalation traps.

#Nima

No.

#Pepe

The Iranians are going to keep...

#Nima

Yeah. It seems that we've lost Pepe. Let's see if he's going to get back. Let me just contact him. It seems that there is a problem with the connection.

#Pepe

Let me just...

#Nima

He's going to be back in just a second. He's connected to the internet. I don't know what happened to his system. Let's see. Yeah, he's back. Yeah, you're back.

#Pepe

Looks like the CIA is working overtime. Yeah. Well, I'm very close to the American embassy here, Nima. It's a monster. I can see it from my veranda. So yes, they are working overtime.

#Nima

Pepe, just breaking news here. I don't know if you can call any of these tweets, any of these social posts from Donald Trump, but he says we may hold negotiations with the Iranians on Friday.

#Pepe

Yes.

#Nima

Iranian foreign minister, he says, we currently have no plans to negotiate. It's just right after that, Iran saying that. Wow.

#Pepe

I think he's trying to convince the Iranians with this bloody post: "Please, I want to talk to you. Please talk to me."

#Nima

There is no way, Pepe, to negotiate with the United States under the current situation with the blockade. I think he needs to back down with the blockade. If not, Iran is not going to negotiate. We know what is happening in the region with the GCC countries. The UAE is running out of cash, and soon they're going to run out of food, run out of everything in their countries. This is not a sustainable position for Donald Trump, and he knows that. He has some sort of golden time if he wants to back down, if he wants. If he's really serious and accepting not only the blockade, Iran has some sort of preconditions for the negotiations because they've seen no sign of seriousness in the Americans in the initial negotiations, you know, round of negotiation. That's why many people need to understand, in Iran, many people are criticizing: what is the point of negotiating with the United States? Why do we need to negotiate if they're not prepared to do anything?

#Pepe

Yeah. Go ahead. You're understanding. Absolutely. And it's a very coherent, cohesive issue. It was the same argument from the beginning. The Iranians have not deviated from what they have been saying for weeks. The 10-pointer, the list of conditions, the fact that apparently there's lots of fog of war, but Trump had more or less agreed with the 10-pointer, assuming he read the real Iranian 10-pointer and not something lost in translation. Probably option number two, he read something lost in

translation. Whose fault it is, it's open to enormous debate. But for a while, it looked like he was amenable to some sort of diplomatic understanding. Now it's desperation. Now it's, I need to find an off-ramp or whatever that is. There is a very, very simple off-ramp. You just mentioned it. Abandon this stupid blockade.

Very, very simple. It's a start. And Iran already said, with the blockade, no negotiation. If there's no more blockade, that's a start. Possibly Iran will start talking again. But of course, there's still the 10-pointers. You have to go through the 10 points and start discussing one by one. We are very, very far from that. On the contrary, once again, any way you look at it, we have escalation on both sides. And the American escalation is out of desperation because they cannot implement this so-called blockade. It has already been proven. Over 20 ships passed through, coming and leaving from the Strait of Hormuz. For the moment, the Americans captured what? They captured two so far, right? Yeah, two. And the Iranians captured two or possibly three, depending on what happens today, the sequence of what happens today.

So there's escalation on both sides. So soon we could reach a situation where you have one ship too many that is captured, and one of the sides is going to escalate for good. That's why it's so dangerous. The Iranians don't need to escalate for good, but if—and of course there's another major, major if—the Chinese... Since yesterday, I spent almost two days scouring every source of information in China to have some sort of analysis of the fact that the Americans are going straight after ships sending oil to China. Sooner or later, what happens if they board a Chinese tanker?

The Chinese will have to jump off the fence and enter the chat, which is what they don't want to do, but they may be forced to do it. So what are they going to do? Are they able or not? Will they be willing to send a task force to the Gulf of Oman? Would they be willing to have a face-to-face with the U.S. Navy? That's—wow—that's the big question. And for the moment, the Chinese position is, to say the least, very, very murky. I'm going to China next month. I finally made up my mind. I'm going to China anyway next month before Trump goes to Beijing because I want to talk to a lot of people over there, especially about that, assuming they will be willing to talk about it.

Because even in relatively independent Chinese media, nobody's talking about it. And China knows that the war ultimately is against them. They know that in detail. So are they going to keep... They have the right to respond much... Of course, the Chinese never respond to anything symmetrically. It's going to be asymmetric and long-term. But if they see that their relationship with Iran, part of the strategic relationship—the 25-year, \$400 billion energy infrastructure pact—if this is being threatened directly by the U.S., they're going to have to do something about it. And that's where we're going. This is part of the escalation trap.

The escalation trap includes China, not only Iran. So any way you look at it, Nima, it gets more dangerous by the minute. Whatever happens, it gets more dangerous by the minute. No question. And all that could be prevented if we had a rational president of the United States, which is exactly what we don't have. And even worse now, because now he is like a cornered animal. He knows that

everything is going wrong. He looks at the oil market, he looks at the bond market, he looks at Wall Street, he looks at the running crises everywhere—jet fuel, you name it. And there's no way out because his ego still rules. It would be tragicomic if it were not so tragic.

#Nima

Pepe, you mentioned Donald Trump had asked General Kelly about nuclear codes.

#Pepe

Our friend Larry Johnson got this information from one of his friends who is very close to J.D. Vance. And this is an excellent source. So this guy told Larry, and obviously this guy has no reason to lie. This is extremely serious. Extremely serious. He's being undermined by his own generals.

#Nima

The question is, why does he need to do that? I think the answer is somehow, yeah, not only is it desperation finally, but it's the reality of the offensive capability of the United States, because it was reported on CNN that the United States is critically running low in terms of cruise missiles. And these cruise missiles are the backbone of their offensive attacks, their offensive capabilities on Iran. That's why Donald Trump is seeing, even with the escalation—let's assume in the worst-case scenario we'd be getting back to war, which I think finally we're getting there little by little—they don't have the capabilities to sustain that sort of attack. The level of the war that we've seen for 40 days, the United States is not going to be able to continue that. This is the problem.

#Pepe

No, they can't. They would sustain this for a week, maybe two. That's it. And obviously, they would not be able to break Iran. The people who have a brain in the Pentagon are slowly reaching this conclusion. You have to take months. Anything would take months. A shock and awe lasting months, assembling a credible ground invasion—everything takes months. He doesn't have time. He needs to solve this thing in the next two weeks max before his trip to China, assuming the Chinese will want to talk to him. This trip can be aborted at the last minute. And if the blockade continues to attack Chinese interests, the Chinese have no interest in talking to Trump next month. No interest whatsoever.

#Nima

He basically wants to get there to talk about the relationship between the United States and China, or does he want to talk about something bigger than that, considering all the conflicts?

#Pepe

No, several dossiers, Nima—Taiwan, obviously, tariffs, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, artificial intelligence—but basically Taiwan and tariffs. And he would like to arrive in Beijing in a position of force, which is the last thing that he has at the moment. He will arrive in Beijing as a defeated president. And obviously, the Chinese are going to have a ball. They're going to eat Trump shark fin soup for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. So he's desperate. He needs to show up in Beijing with something to show. There's nothing to show. On the contrary.

And on top of it, at the moment, with the blockade, they are antagonizing China even more than they usually do, right? So from his point of view, it's an unmitigated disaster. No wonder he's having fits—depending on the sources, of course—but some of these reports seem to be credible. He's yelling at everybody. He usually cannot concentrate for more than five seconds. Now he cannot concentrate for more than two or three seconds, treating everybody horribly—explosions, you name it. Completely unhinged, out of control. So this is grounds for the 25th Amendment, really. Obviously, if Republicans had the balls to do it.

#Nima

Pepe, China is just sitting back and watching what has happened in Ukraine—total failure in the negotiation talks that Donald Trump has had since he won, since he was elected in the United States—with the Russians, total failure. They're not achieving anything. And with the talks with Iran, with the case of the war in the Middle East, what they're seeing is just nothing positive that brings some sort of hope in the ongoing talks and negotiations with Donald Trump, because they're just seeing the total failure in the capabilities of the Trump administration to negotiate, to talk, to communicate.

#Pepe

And how would someone, even if they sent J.D.?

#Nima

Vance, I would say J.D. Vance was one of the last hopes in the Trump administration. It's done. Everything's done with the Trump administration. And I don't see the Chinese being that naive to believe that Donald Trump would mean something, and that meeting with Donald Trump would mean something in the long run.

#Pepe

No, they're not. But the Chinese are sticklers for protocol, diplomatic protocol. So they will probably follow all the diplomatic motions. Impeccable. After all, it's the equivalent of Chinese dynasties. You go to Beijing as an official guest, you're treated with pomp, circumstance, and all that. But it doesn't mean anything. It will be a protocol visit. From a Chinese point of view, they receive dignitaries from

all over the world nonstop. This will be just another one. And nothing of substance will be discussed, because Trump is not ready to discuss anything. And the Chinese know that he's not ready. And the Chinese are very good at instrumentalizing this position of power that they have in this meeting next month, but in a very sophisticated, understated way. So there won't be any explosions. Basically, nothing important will happen.

#Nima

Pepe, I think there are the communication lines between Iran and Russia, between Russia and China, and then China and Iran. What do we know about that? What is the level of communication that is happening, considering the strength of Formosa is important after all? We know with the case of sanctions, all of them, they know somehow, one way or another. They know what the sanction is, what the policy in Washington is. But how do you see the level of communication with this sort of chaos happening?

#Pepe

Well, look, China-Iran at the moment is very, very murky, to say the least. The number one example: Xi Jinping, for forty-something days, did not say anything about the war or about the Strait of Hormuz. The first time he said something was after MBS, from Riyadh, called Beijing to talk to Xi Jinping. And then Xi Jinping made his first official pronouncement, basically a platitude, what everybody knows — that we need to open the Strait of Hormuz because this is what the international community wants. So this begs, I would say, a lot of questions.

Why didn't he say anything before? Why did he choose to say that exactly after talking not with, for instance, Tehran, but with MBS from Saudi Arabia? So, the Chinese are caught in a very uncomfortable situation because all these nations are Chinese partners — the Persian Gulf monarchies and Iran — different levels of communication, of course, of interaction, but they're all partners, and China imports energy from all of them. So we can read the Chinese ideal position as, okay, let's be friends with everybody. You can't do this anymore. Sorry. Realpolitik. It's not that you're going to have to take sides, but you have to be more forceful in a few angles. And if you have a strategic partnership with Iran, you have to be there.

We know that the Chinese have been there in many aspects, in terms of the Beidou satellite integration, stuff that they might have sent, but we are not 100% sure that they sent to Iran. The famous sodium perchlorate contribution — solid fuel for Iranian ballistic missiles — usually comes from the port of Gaolan in Zhuhai, in southern China, which was the case of the one that was apprehended by the Americans. The Americans were laser-focused on the ship because it came from this port, which in American minds, ah, that's the sodium perchlorate port, so let's go after the ship. But, for instance, today I linked it in my Telegram, and please take a look over there.

It was translated in Brazil by our friends from Brazil, Comunidade Seca, Seca Community in Brazil. They made an excellent translation. It's an excellent analysis of the contradictions of Chinese foreign policy in West Asia. From what I read these past few months, it's the best Chinese analysis. It's a Chinese analysis on what China is getting wrong in West Asia. And, of course, now the open conflict between the Persian Gulf petromonarchies and Iran. So they are in a very, very tricky position now. It's not that they need to take sides, but they need to have a clear foreign policy, even communicating to Iran the limits of how much they can be very close partners, if there are such limits.

It's certain that for the leadership in Tehran, this is not clear. And of course, we don't know, Nima, none of us know. There may be underground parallel channels at the highest level for communication between Tehran and Beijing. I'm sure there are, but none of us will ever know about it. So I assume they are discussing that. And the Chinese are trying to explain to the Iranians, look, we cannot openly support what you're doing, even though we do, because you are staring down the empire. So, obviously, it's in our super, super interest that you prevail. If you don't, we know what's going to happen next. We are next. We Chinese are next. So, obviously, everybody in decision-making circles in Beijing, they know that. But because the way the Chinese move is much more opaque compared to the West, of course, and even compared to Russia, we really don't know the details.

But they are in a very uncomfortable position. And once again, coming back to what we discussed a few minutes ago, if they see that they are being directly attacked by the Americans in terms of their supply of oil from the Persian Gulf, they will have to act. They have to establish some sort of deterrence. And then the Americans will freak out. There's no question about that. And this will have nothing to do with Taiwan. This will probably have to do with what the Americans are planning for the Strait of Malacca. And they have been getting ready for this for, once again, 20 years at least. Okay, Nima. No, this is wild. I hope I'll be able to talk about this next month in China, but I don't think so. I'm not sure people or the analysts that I know, the scholars, will be allowed to talk about this. Maybe off the record, on and off, yeah.

#Nima

I think China recognizes the drastic changes that have happened in West Asia, considering what has happened so far with the American bases, the way that Iran is talking about. Are you there, Pepe? Yeah, it seems that we've lost Pepe again, but he's gonna be back.

#Pepe

Let me just check that out.

#Nima

Yeah, it seems again it's the connection. Yeah, he's going to be back.

#Nima

I think what is happening with the case of China—Pepe is going to be back with us—is that China is seeing what is happening with the United States in the region. It's a huge vacuum right now. It's a huge sort of influence of the United States being somehow, with the case of the American bases, Iran is forcing them out of the region, and the GCC countries are feeling that. Even we had the UAE talking about how they don't want an American base on their soil. I don't know if they're honest in the way they're talking about it, but at least they're talking about it. And here is Pepe back.

#Pepe

The CIA is working full-time tonight, Nima.

#Nima

Pepe, I was talking about the situation in the Middle East. I'm talking about the vacuum that has been created since this war started because of the Iranian attack on American bases. They basically don't want the United States in the region. So there is a huge vacuum there. And we have the history of the rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Who's going to be in a better position to put some sort of— I think finally what the region needs to understand is that they need a security architecture in the region without the United States, because the United States' priority is not the region, is not the prosperity of the region, is not the tranquility of the region; it's about Israel.

It's all about Israel—what Israel is getting out of these conflicts and chaos. And that's not going to benefit. I think the GCC countries are understanding somehow, getting to that point. And who's going to be able to put an end? I don't know if they're going to be able to put an end to it, but just to reduce this sort of enmity that is happening right now, that exists between Iran and the GCC countries because of this war. And China sees itself in that position, connecting or bringing them together.

#Pepe

Well, the only serious possibility for a post-American Persian Gulf—Persian Gulf monarchies of West Asia as a whole—would be a new security arrangement. There are two possibilities. Let's say that the ideal possibility would be Russia as the guarantor of this new arrangement. They have very good relations with all the players involved. Maybe Russia-China. That's more complicated because the Chinese would not like to be involved in a security operation very far away from Chinese borders. And the other possibility is already in progress. It would be, let's say, a sort of Pakistani-Turkish

consortium. The Pakistanis already made their move. The Turks are desperate to get more involved. And there are, of course, neo-Ottoman echoes, if not when they're going to make their move. So this is a very, very strong possibility—Pakistan and Turkey. Saudi Arabia is relatively fine with it.

The Emirates is more complicated because Turkey, their ally, is Qatar. It's not the Emirates. The Emirates, their ally, is Israel. They made their bet. They are a Zionist outpost. So, as we know, Israel is already painting Turkey as the next Iran. So the whole thing is already a bloody mess. It has not even started and is already a bloody mess. So Pakistan, in the end, might be the default solution. And obviously, the Pakistani industrial-military complex, they're going to love that. But there's an extra problem, Nima. The Pakistani industrial-military complex is an extension of the American industrial-military complex. So, as you can see, there are no easy answers. Our wishful thinking, in terms of a solid solution, a protective umbrella for the GCC, would be Russia—assuming the Russians would be interested. But for the moment, I would say the number one candidate is Pakistan.

#Nima

Pepe, we know that NATO countries didn't have some sort of independent foreign policy. I'm basically talking about European countries. They didn't have foreign policy because it was all defined by NATO, which means the United States. They decided about the foreign policy—what that would be and how they're going to behave, for example, in Ukraine, against China, against Russia, right now in the Middle East. But in the Middle East, they are facing something different from Europe. They're seeing something that they haven't seen, for example, with the case of Ukraine. Donald Trump right now is dividing NATO countries into two camps, two different parts. He says the naughty and nice countries. Naughty countries, you know—nice countries would be Romania, Poland, the Baltics, all together that supported him with the operation in the Middle East.

The naughty ones would be Spain, France, the United Kingdom. I think there is something to be learned from this process, that these countries can define their foreign policy toward Russia based on their domestic needs, based on their national benefit. And that's—I think this is hitting Europe. At least Spain is understanding what's going on. At least Spain is trying to communicate with China, with Iran. I would say with Russia, because they have received one of the biggest tankers of oil or gas from Russia. And these are huge changes that are happening. And somehow Europe is coming out of this war, out of this chaos, and thinking or rethinking about the process of their foreign policy and how their foreign policy can be redefined and re-implemented. How do you see that in Europe?

#Pepe

Well, Europe is already extra fragmented. It's going to be even more fragmented from now on. Same with NATO. So both processes will advance in parallel—disintegration one and disintegration two. And they're going to meet in the end at disintegration central. But, of course, NATO, the warmongering arm of NATO, is going to get even worse from now on. That's roughly the UK, Finland, Poland, and the Baltic Chihuahuas. And we can also add Germany—re-weaponized, re-

armed Germany—which is something that, when you mention to the French, they have serial heart attacks. And we have a Europe that is starting to think with more than two neurons.

Spain, for instance, Italy, depending on what comes next, but there are some rumblings at least that they're starting to wake up. So this means that the division inside the EU and NATO is already huge. The most complicated problem, which is going to get much, much worse all the way to 2030—which is their self-proclaimed date for the new war against Russia—it could be 2028, it could be 2029, but they're aiming at 2030, less than five years, is the warmongering NATO brand. And of course, led by the UK. So Russia, sooner or later, is going to have to deal with it. Once again, they're going to have to deal with that forcefully. For the moment, the Russians are wait-and-see. They know that they are being attacked.

Their oil infrastructure inside the Russian Federation is being targeted. The attacks are directly coordinated. If not, they are directly coordinated, originated, and instrumentalized by NATO and especially the Brits. So they're going to have to do something about that. There's a huge discussion going on in Russia about that already. That's it. When you don't cut the head of the snake in the beginning, the snake keeps, and that's it, you know, keeps going. The EU is much more complicated because the EU, considering the economic crisis, which is being exacerbated by the war on Iran and the American blockade, the EU can collapse in the next few months, in fact. So they are in an extremely precarious position.

#Nima

Yeah, you're back.

#Pepe

Yeah, okay. They are in an extremely precarious position. Not only did they commit political suicide, but now it's energetic suicide, geopolitical suicide, economic suicide, and cultural suicide as well. They supported the genocide in Gaza. And obviously, they did not really condemn the American war on Iran. Not really. You see a few rumblings here and there in a few nation-states, but nothing from Brussels. On the contrary, Brussels, if they could, would slap more sanctions on Iran today. So Brussels is a lost case. And in fact, both Brussels. When you talk about Brussels, there's Brussels-NATO and Brussels-European Commission. Both Brussels. One subordinated to another. Brussels-European Commission subordinated to Brussels-NATO. Once again, collapsing on all fronts.

And even with the Hungary play, it was fantastic. Viktor Orbán played them completely. Totally. Totally. They don't know what's coming. And Hungary is not going to be the pliable vassal that they were hoping it would be. So the signs of internal rot in Brussels everywhere are more than visible. And who's paying the price? European taxpayers. Most of them paying absurd amounts of taxes for nothing. And soon they're going to have less than nothing back from their governments. Well, it's part of the general collapse of the formerly collective West, Nima, now fragmented West. Because

now it's divided between the empire and all of you are a bunch of rats. We don't care about you. The empire only cares about itself and Israel, of course.

#Nima

More for Israel than itself.

#Pepe

More for Israel than themselves. Yes.

#Nima

This is ridiculous. Thank you so much, Pepe.

#Pepe

Muito obrigado. Obrigado, Nima. Thank you so much. Yeah, the nights in Asia, my nights start like this. You know, I go out for a wonderful walk. There's a beautiful park nearby. There's an absolutely crazy new shopping mall complex and all that with fountains. And then on my walk, I can think. And when I come back here, I start doing the podcasts at night. And then I go all night following the dementia in the US. I sleep in the morning and I write in the afternoon. That's my very exciting life in Asia.

#Nima

It's good. Obrigado, Pepe. Grande prazer.

#Pepe

Obrigado. Enorme abraço. And remember, everyone, our audience, a luta continua.

#Nima

Continua, exatamente. See you later, Pepe. Bye.