

Pepe Escobar: After America: New Power Blocs in West Asia

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#Nima

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 maximum 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 tried 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, which was 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, included 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, Araqchi is marginalized. Can you imagine the stupid American mainstream media saying that Araqchi was put under house arrest? They have no idea what is happening. Yeah, do you see that, Nima? It's completely absurd. 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's 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 Araqchi, 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. No. If the blockade stays, there's no meaning. It's as simple as that. But, Nima, and I'd like to hear your insight about that. What Professor Robert Poppet said about the escalation trap—I see the escalation trap on both sides progressing in parallel. Because we have Iranians, for

instance, today, Iranians today, they confiscated two MSC vessels. And the day before, the Americans attacked an Iranian vessel, Indo-Pak-Com, 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 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 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 over, you know, since the mid-2000s. So the past 20 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, you know, for example, that Tusca tanker. It was related to China, basically. It was going back to China. It's not just about...

#Pepe

Please, go ahead.

#Nima

On the other hand, Pepe, I think we have to see the big picture and how long they can 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 own 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, 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 annually. 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, 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've 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, right? 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 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 that's why this is... People all around... 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 Epstein 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 soon, 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 ramp.

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...

#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, exchange swaps, exchanges, Islamic banking, you name it. There are so many ways.

#Nima

Because there were moments in the last 46 years when 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 admitting his own mistakes. It's a typical trait of a psychopath, sociopath. 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 at least we could have had 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, or be 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. It will

collapse sooner, I would say sooner rather than later. It could be anything, because now we have two parallel escalation traps. No. The Iranians are going to keep... Yeah.

#Nima

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.

Let me just... He's going to be back in a second.

#Nima

He's connected to the internet. I don't know what happened to his system.

Let's see.

Yeah, he's back.

#Pepe

Yeah, you're back. 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. He says, we may hold negotiations with the Iranians on Friday. And the Iranian foreign ministry says, we currently have no plans to negotiate. It's just right after that, Iran saying that. He's trying to convince the Iranians with this bloody post: please, I want to talk to you, please talk to me.