

David Pyne: America's Middle East Trap: How Iran Controls the World's Oil

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#Nima

Last time we talked, there was no war in the Middle East. Right now, there is a war going on, and we have some sort of ceasefire, but the war is still going on. And I think it's good to just step back and look at what has happened so far. We had the 12-day war, and then this year, on February 28th, we had the second round of the war. And here is what J.D. Vance said before the war, the first round of the war happening in June 2025. And the way that he was selling, you know, he was bringing the people, India and ISIS, into this war. Here is what he said.

#Guest

With Americans who are exhausted after 25 years of foreign entanglements in the Middle East, I understand the concern. But the difference is that back then we had dumb presidents, and now we have a president who actually knows how to accomplish America's national security objectives. So this is not going to be some long, drawn-out thing. We've gone in, we've done the job of setting their nuclear program back, and we're going to now work to permanently dismantle that nuclear program over the coming years. And that is what the president has set out to do.

#David

Simple principle.

#Guest

Iran can't have a nuclear weapon. That has animated American policy over the past 130 days. It's going to continue to be a driving force of our policy in the Middle East for the next three and a half years.

#Nima

Yeah, getting back to today, yesterday we learned that because of the consequences of the war, it seems there are some discussions happening within the military. That's why we had the Secretary of the Navy being fired by Pete Hegseth. What is your understanding of the current situation? Donald Trump, I think, has trapped himself in the Middle East somehow. What's your understanding of that?

#David

Yeah, you're absolutely right. You know, just as Dr. Robert Pape has stated, the Iran war is an escalation trap that was set by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu essentially to force Trump and the United States to fight Israel's war against Iran to the detriment of U.S. national security, to the detriment of our economic security. This blockade, you know, the war is not over yet. The blockade is continuing with no end in sight, and it's going to cause both a U.S. and a global recession. Unfortunately, that's going to affect most of the countries in the world very negatively. It's going to cause shortages. Obviously, gas prices are going up. Jet fuel is in very short supply, particularly in Europe, as well as East Asia, South Korea, Japan, and other countries like that. So it's caused a lot of disruption.

President Trump, you know, he had a plan. He had a national security strategy, which was to pull us out of Europe and the Middle East, focus on the Western Hemisphere, providing security to our Western Hemispheric allies, as well as consolidating U.S. dominance in the northern, or rather North America, region, perhaps with a greater number of U.S. military forces in Greenland, trying to pressure communist regimes in Cuba and Venezuela, which are as yet largely untouched. And, of course, prioritizing trade in the U.S. economy. And this war has caused all of his great national security strategy and his America First trade policy to really go down the drain. All the economic progress that he was able to make in his first, I don't know, 15, 16 months, I guess 13 months in office, has been reversed and is much worse now.

Gas prices are up, I think, 33 to 40%. That can get a lot worse because it's going to take—I mean, it would take six months just to clear the mines out of the Strait of Hormuz. Obviously, there's no military solution to the U.S. regaining control. We never had control of the Strait of Hormuz, but at least the U.S. was kind of able to assure that it remained a free transit international waterway, and that is no longer going to be the case because Iran has renamed it the Strait of Persia. It's now, you know, effectively under IRGC naval control, and there's nothing we can do about it short of making some grand concessions to Iran in a peace deal that they think are sufficient to allow free passage.

#Nima

David, what is the off-ramp? You mentioned the situation that Donald Trump is in right now. And many people are arguing the simple solution for that is just leaving the region—leaving just Iraq, Afghanistan—just leave the region. And the countries that are using the Strait of Hormuz, they're going to come and talk with the Iranians, and they're going to find their solution, their sort of

solution. But Donald Trump somehow, as you know, you remember when this war started, it was all about regime change. It wasn't just because Donald Trump himself reached that conclusion.

Because Benjamin Netanyahu, as the New York Times reported, provided information to Donald Trump and his administration that they just needed to go there, attack the regime, kill the supreme leader together with the commander, and the regime would collapse. And the people would come out and all of that. Coming back to today, Donald Trump is posting something like this—that there is a fracture in the leadership in Iran. Some people want to talk with us, make a deal. The others don't want to make a deal. "Let's go and kill the bad guys in Iran." You see these sorts of conspiracy theories and this sort of delusional thinking. Is it going to help the United States? Is it going to help Donald Trump and his administration?

#David

No, it's despicable and dishonorable behavior even to threaten those attacks. Obviously, we murdered 50 Iranian leaders along with members of the first family, the family of the supreme leader, both Ali Khamenei as well as Mojtaba Khamenei, the current supreme leader. And, you know, women and children—the U.S., and I guess it was Israel that did it, but fully U.S.-supported—to murder those leaders. And this was an unprovoked sneak attack. I mean, Iran, you know, had essentially been minding its own business. Yes, it had conducted its Iranian proxies that, you know, killed and wounded a few—killed three men, U.S. troops, I think it was—I don't know, 2023. I think that was in response to what Israel was doing in Gaza.

Obviously, the genocide—initially it was a just war, but then Israel decided to turn it into a war of aggression by Israel, destroying 92% of Gazan homes under the pretext that the 1.7% of Gazan citizens that were Hamas were hiding there. Obviously, that was ridiculous. But yeah, this has just proven disastrous. It's been disastrous for the U.S. on every level—militarily, it's weakened us militarily, economically, politically. It's going to be disastrous. The Republicans are going to lose both houses of Congress, Trump's going to get impeached. There's an outside chance he could even be removed. But the bottom line is, you know, Iran is—you know, we keep saying that Iran is a different animal, that their Islamist regime is different, they're terrorists, they can't be reasoned with.

They only understand the use of force. In fact, the truth is the opposite. The U.S. and Israel—not that we're terrorist regimes—but we use state terrorism against other countries. Killing their leadership for no reason, with no provocation, was an act of state-sponsored terror. And a lot of Americans don't understand that. We have this idea, I think, in the United States, that the lives of Muslim civilians or certainly, you know, Islamic leaders have no value. So, you know, we're indoctrinated as American citizens by our government and our education system to cheerlead that. And I just think it's despicable. I've abandoned my support for President Trump. I've supported him for almost a decade, and since he started this war, I no longer support him. It's really a sad time to be an American, to be honest.

#Nima

Yeah. You look at the Middle East today. What would you bring? What is the difference, you know, when it comes to the Persian Gulf today? You mentioned the Strait of Hormuz. How do you draw the differences before this war started and right now, the situation that we're in, considering the Persian Gulf and GCC countries, Iran, and the region?

#David

Well, the U.S. has been viewed as a source of stability and security for the Gulf nations—the UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and other countries. And it no longer is, because they found out the hard way that we started this unprovoked war of aggression against Iran, and they retaliated by attacking our bases. And they didn't just attack our bases; they also attacked some government and energy targets within those countries to essentially teach them a lesson that the U.S. is not the regional hegemony of the Persian Gulf, but the Islamic Republic of Iran is. And the U.S. reacted not by increasing our missile defense and troop levels in those countries, but by, I believe, moving a lot of our missile defenses and troops to Israel or pulling out our troops, to prove that our security umbrella was fictitious from the beginning, or at least has become such.

And so I think that has shown the world, but certainly our allies in the region, that the U.S. can't be trusted to defend them and provide security. And they're wanting this war to, you know, I think with the exception of maybe some Saudi leaders, maybe the UAE, they want this war to end as soon as possible. And then they're like, as you said, they're going to make a deal with Iranian leaders to ensure, you know, to collaborate, to assure Iran that they're not enemies. They're not going to side with the U.S. militarily. Obviously, there's not a single country in the world that's come to the U.S.'s assistance, aside from Israel, of course, that started this war.

All of our NATO allies, you know, they didn't send so much as a minesweeper or a military advisor, you know, showing that the NATO alliance doesn't apply outside of the North Atlantic region, which, of course, it doesn't. But, you know, Trump has responded by threatening to leave NATO, which I think would be an awesome development. If there's anything good that could come out of this horrible war, I think the U.S. leaving NATO would be a really great deal. Obviously, we could pull out of the war in Ukraine. That war could end very quickly. And then the U.S. could go back to being a hemispheric superpower, as I've been advocating for the past 23 years.

#Nima

I remember you said that, you know, before the election, you, Vivek Ramaswamy, then you joined Donald Trump, and you mentioned that various times on this podcast. But David, we had John Kerry talking about what has happened with the case of Netanyahu. He literally said each and every

administration had this proposal from Benjamin Netanyahu. He wanted this war for such a long time. How... Do you see that the only guy who decided to go to war is Donald Trump? Why is that? What was the problem? And how did he convince Donald Trump and his administration to go to this war?

#David

Well, yeah, those reports are absolutely correct. I mean, from the time of the George W. Bush administration, Netanyahu has gone to the White House and tried to do a hard sell of this kind. Really, all he was asking for, essentially, was the friend-or-foe codes so they could fly their aircraft over Jordan and Iraq and not get shot down. And Bush, Obama, and Biden all chose to deny that permission for Israel, essentially, to start a war of aggression against Iran. And it was only Trump who was foolish enough to approve it. And he did so despite the fact that the U.S. has had war games for the last 20 years that have shown that in a war between the U.S. and Iran, Iran cannot be defeated. I would call that a U.S. defeat. So essentially, we knew that such a war would be unwinnable.

And as the New York Times article stated, you know, there were heated and chaotic discussions in the Cabinet and the National Security Council where everyone essentially said that, you know, this is going to be a bad deal. It might not be winnable. And the only ones that said it was winnable, of course, were Hanks, Seth, and Trump. And, you know, Netanyahu and their voices prevailed. But J. D. Vance, you know, did a great job trying to dissuade the president from doing this, taking this action and going to war with Iran, starting an unnecessary imperial war of aggression that's a regional war, a great power war, the first we've seen that the U.S. has been involved in since the Korean War, that had a major possibility of escalating into World War III. Thankfully, with the ceasefire, Trump appears to have tired of this war, seeing that it's unwinnable.

He can't get Iran to do what he wants them to do, so he's going to do the ceasefire. He's extended it indefinitely as of two days ago. Of course, he could change—he could change on a dime. He was famous for that. But based on other articles, there was a Wall Street Journal article that came out that said he acted fearfully. As soon as we, you know, had an airman that shot down—an Air Force colonel who was the weapons officer in the F-15E that was shot down by Iranian air defenses—he said, "We need to get him back because I'm worried that this could sink my poll numbers." Well, his poll numbers are already in the tank, but I think he's learned his lesson that he shouldn't do a ground invasion of Iran because it would be disastrous for us.

#Nima

I think that Benjamin Netanyahu finally got to that place, because as we talked about before, he wanted this war. In your assessment, what has been the outcome of this war so far for Israel? Israel is different. They think differently. They don't see it the same way, even with the war happening in

Iran. I would argue the agenda on the part of the Israelis was totally different from what was in the mind of the Trump administration. But considering their agenda, their sort of understanding of the war against Iran, what have they achieved so far?

#David

Well, for Netanyahu, you're right. Their interests are very different from those of the United States. They don't care if the Strait of Hormuz is closed. They don't get much, if any, oil out of the Strait of the Persian Gulf. So Netanyahu's objective has been very clear over the past 20 years, maybe 25 years. His agenda has been Israeli hegemony over the entire Middle East region, with the exception of Pakistan, essentially. So Iran was really—after he succeeded in getting the U.S. to help him overthrow the Assad regime in Syria, which I would argue was much more favorable than the former al-Qaeda-led regime we have today in Syria—then he degraded—actually, Hamas wasn't degraded too much.

They actually gained a lot more militiamen since Israel started that war. It was a major defeat for Israel and pretty much one-to-one casualties. Hamas went from, I think, 25,000 or 32,000 to 40,000. So they've actually been strengthened by that war. But Hezbollah has been partially degraded, so there's been limited successes in Lebanon. Of course, that war was raging until like a week ago, and it could restart at any moment. But I do think that Iran—or rather Israel—calculates that the Iran war has been able... U.S. intelligence reports that 50 percent of Iran's missile launchers have been taken out, one-third of its air force, and 40 percent of its navy. Specifically, I think the IRGC Navy has been destroyed or disabled.

So there has been some success militarily. Certainly, the Iranian economy has been massively damaged. You know, their financial system, the worth of their currency, has gone down a lot. I think that could recover within not too much time after a war ended and a blockade ended. But there has been substantial weakening from that end. But in terms of the strategic level, Iran has been greatly strengthened because they are now the regional hegemon of the Gulf, and people have to recognize that. The U.S. has to recognize that, essentially. The U.S. Navy has proven powerless to dispute Iranian control. So that is kind of a revolution in regional power dynamics.

#Nima

You mentioned the domestic, and we know that the Trump administration came a long, long way when it comes to the war with Iran. We had Charlie Kirk before the war, the first round of war happening. He did everything. We remember what he was trying to do. He said, no, this war is going to be devastating. We don't need this war. The United States doesn't need this war. We know what has happened to Charlie Kirk. Then we had Tucker Carlson, Candace Owens, all the people—Megyn Kelly, the people who were supporting unconditionally Donald Trump.

They didn't receive anything from Donald Trump, I would say. They did everything to help him get elected. But finally, who's the best friend of the president of the United States? It's Lindsey Graham. It's just unbelievable. It doesn't matter if you have Joe Biden in office or Donald Trump. The best friend continues to be Lindsey Graham. What is that? How is that going to influence the Republican Party and the future of the party, considering the way that Donald Trump has somehow destroyed his base?

#David

Yeah, great question. So, you know, Trump's election-winning MAGA coalition was wide-ranging and included, you know, working-class Democrats, educated white people, even Blacks and Hispanics, and pretty much independents and everyone. He almost won youth, the young adults, during the November 2024 election, and that coalition is pretty much gone. And he's, you know, as Piers Morgan has stated, he absolutely seems to be going after everyone. You know, he's going after Christians, he's going after Catholics, he's insulted the Pope, he pretends he's Jesus. He wants us to worship him as some kind of minor deity.

I mean, he's just gone completely, completely nuts, and he's threatening nuclear genocide against 92 million Iranian civilians. And, you know, claiming that he has Iran's best, you know, the people's best interests at heart. I mean, it's ludicrous. And this is not the leader we elected. We elected a leader who gave his inaugural address and said he was going to be a transformational peace president that ended America's forever wars and didn't start any new ones and saved us from World War III. And with the exception of World War III, he's pretty much gone 180 degrees in the opposite direction.

So I think this is going to severely imperil the Republican Party's electoral prospects for not just the next two elections, but maybe the next three or four. We could lose power for a generation. I'm a lifelong Republican. Again, I've been a Trump supporter for many years. He totally lost me on this one. He can get me back if he makes peace with Iran, drops the blockade, signs a deal acceptable to Iran, pulls U.S. troops out of the Middle East, cuts off security assistance to Israel, and ends the war in Ukraine. It's just really the Middle East part that I'm concerned about. So I would support him again if he did all those things I just mentioned.

But then, as an added bonus, I'd like to see him pull out of NATO, or at least the NATO military command structure, and sign a bilateral peace deal with Russia, and then pressure Zelensky to sign it. But, you know, that's a long road. I don't think he's going to do it. He's surrounded himself with neocons. He's reportedly planning on forcing Tulsi Gabbard out as Director of National Intelligence by November. You know, Vice President J.D. Vance has reportedly been sidelined in policy discussions. He wasn't allowed to be with Trump during both the Venezuela and Iran war strikes because he opposed both. So he's put his principles first. I think he's in a good position to win the nomination, but Trump has destroyed his chances to win the general election in 2028.

