

Patrick Henningsen: Why Pakistan, Russia & Oman Change the Game

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#Nima

The latest news about the Iranian foreign minister is that he posted on his X account that he's going on a tour to Islamabad, then to Muscat in Oman, and later on he'll be in Moscow. He said the last sentence in his post was that our neighbors are our priority. That's why he's doing this. And later on, we've learned from CNN that Donald Trump is preparing Steve Whitcomb and Jared Kushner to be sent to Islamabad.

The problem is that the Iranian team said it's not on their plan, and even we had some news in Iranian media, in Persian media, saying that there is no condition, the situation is not there. They're not there to talk with the United States. And it's a visit on the part of the Iranian delegation, the Iranian foreign minister, to Islamabad. It's part of the, as I said, it was part of the tour. But it seems that Donald Trump is insisting on sending Jared Kushner and Steve Whitcomb to Islamabad to talk with the Iranians. Your understanding of what's going on?

#Patrick

Well, I guess he's looking for things for Whitcomb and Kushner to do so they can appear useful or something. They're not getting enough golf rounds in on the links in Long Island. But no, it's kind of a running joke at this point. What this is is just basically another signal to the United States that the world isn't just going to drop what they're doing in order to accommodate whatever Washington's saying. So it's like, we're sending our envoys, our special envoys, to Islamabad. You know, whatever you've got organized, you can put that off to the side. You've got to see our guys. So they're wanting to be involved. The pattern here is unmistakable, Nima. Who called for the ceasefire?

It wasn't Iran. And who wants to extend the ceasefire? It's not Iran. And extend it again. It's not Iran. That's the United States. Normally, the party that's losing or the party that's at a disadvantage will beg for a ceasefire. And the United States begged for a ceasefire. If you believe the press conferences of Pete Hegseth and the confident statements of Donald Trump, you think that they've

got it all under control and the Iranians are going to learn the lesson to bend to the will of American power or we're just going to destroy them. If that's the case, why did they ask for a ceasefire? So I think a couple of things are clear. Donald Trump has no suitable exit here.

He's got no suitable exit. If he withdraws now, the embarrassment—it's almost like admitting defeat to accept Iranian terms. He can't. Politically, he can't. In his mind, I think he could. If he was smart, he would, and he would sell it and package it in such a way to make it seem like a victory. But they're so dug in with this American dominance narrative that they're afraid. And so he can't do that. He can't withdraw. He can't pull the other card, which is what the MAGA card, the original MAGA card, was: hey, it's not our war, we're not the world's policemen, we don't care what happens in the street. Remember that? We don't care about the Persian Gulf.

We don't get any of our energy from there. Nothing to do with us. The Europeans need to step up. And two weeks later, he's like, no, no, no, we've got to control that. So if he withdrew and said, we're not going to be the world's policeman in the Persian Gulf, well, you're basically leaving Israel pretty much on its own. And the lobby in America won't allow that. So that's off the table. So those are the two main positions that would make sense from a U.S. interest point of view, you could say. But they can't. Those are off limits. Those are blocked for Trump. And the other one is to escalate. The other one is to cover up this catastrophe with another catastrophe, with another layer of crisis.

And that's what all the signals, Nima, are very clear—they're pointing to. The inability to come to any agreement, the inability to conduct kind of mature, logical international relations. You know, just the bare basics, by the way. I mean, we're talking undergrad-level issues—diplomacy and international relations. The Trump administration can't even manage that. They're really incompetent. Donald Trump is probably one of the worst dealmakers in history. You know, that is part of his—like, his book was **The Art of the Deal**. But, you know, building a casino in Atlantic City and trying to undo an undeclared illegal war of aggression is—the level of the mess that's happened globally as a result of this war—trying to undo that with a deal, it's not the same thing.

It's not the same thing. And you can't be ignorant of history. You can't be ignorant of other countries' political interests and sensitivities. And just basically, you can't be ignorant of the security architecture of the region—a post-U.S. security architecture. Because isn't that what we're talking about? We're talking about a post-U.S. Persian Gulf. There's no place for the U.S. in there. Nobody has admitted this in the Trump administration. They're talking like things were as they were a year ago. They're not. This is not the same Persian Gulf. This is not the same Middle East. It will never be the same.

So their inability to kind of confront and accept these realities, and their own sort of incompetence of their negotiators, of their Secretary of State, who's basically AWOL. Marco Rubio is not even—like, nobody knows where he is, what he's doing. I guess he's planning the invasion of Cuba at the moment, another illegal war. They're planning to invade Cuba. So that's what Rubio is busy doing—stealing oil and imposing illegal blockades on U.S. neighbors. So he can't even be bothered to show

up or even weigh in on this war. So it shows you this is a dysfunctional government. They have one choice, which is they have to double down. They can't admit they're wrong, and they have to double down.

And as far as Israel goes, Israel is not able to defend itself right now. That's pretty clear. If hostilities start, there's going to be big problems for Israel—physically, politically, militarily, economically. It's all going to continue to get worse. So this also opens the door, as there's a lot of talk about the deployment of nuclear weapons, and I find this to be very disconcerting and quite shocking and frightening that people are talking about this in such a casual way, as if that's some kind of justifiable solution to a war that the U.S. and Israel started. So it's lies upon lies you hear from the Western side now. Well, lies upon lies. They're piling it on now because they don't want people to look at the root causes of how this began.

And really, this began with the withdrawal from the JCPOA under Trump's first term. That was the timer that set in motion a course of events that led us to this war, that gave them the pretext to escalate under the fake claim—the completely fabricated claim—that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon. Completely fake. And they had to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, which was a perfectly acceptable international treaty. Iran wasn't developing one anyway, but the JCPOA under Obama just gave a double guarantee that they wouldn't be developing one. So, I mean, it's even the best of both worlds for everybody. But by withdrawing from that, it creates a narrative that, oh, look, there's no nuclear deal in place.

Iran's definitely developing a nuclear weapon. Then Trump will turn around now, you know, so many years later—eight years, nine years later—and say the JCPOA put Iran on the path to a nuclear weapon? It's just unbelievable how they can sell this to an increasingly stupid U.S. public and an increasingly brain-dead Fox News and what's left of the MAGA base audience. Because that's what you're dealing with here. People in America who believe any of this, these half-baked talking points, they really need to get their heads checked. Not to mention, I think half of Trump's cabinet needs to be breathalyzed and drug tested immediately, because the things that are coming out of the White House are quite insane at the moment.

#Nima

Patrick, the concept of a blockade is to put economic pressure on Iran. This is a country that, for many of us, I think, has been under U.S. sanctions for such a long time—more than 46 years. So they know how to deal with economic difficulties. And the United States is not—yesterday I talked with Larry Johnson, and he mentioned that at best they're able to control 10 percent of this traffic in and out of the Persian Gulf. And that's totally manageable for the Iranian government. But looking at the situation right now, do you think—it seems to me that Donald Trump is getting to the point of understanding that this blockade is not working?

Yesterday we learned, you know, for example, an IRGC Navy vessel was escorting one of these tankers in the Persian Gulf, and nobody did anything. The U.S. Navy tried to seize it, but they couldn't because of the IRGC. It was some sort of confrontation showing force between the two sides. And it's going to get worse. It's not going to get better for the United States in that region. Iran is in its region. The United States is a guest in that region, or somehow a foreigner to that region. And what does that mean? Do you think it's going to bring new escalations, new cycles of war? And how far would that bring any sort of constructive outcome for the United States?

#Patrick

First of all, a blockade, a military blockade of Iranian ports or Iranian shipping, that's an act of war. So first and foremost, that disqualifies any negotiations. It's not going to happen. There will be no peace settlement. So the idea that Iran must come to the table while you're imposing a blockade on them, while you're boasting—Pete Hegseth is on television, in front of the press conference, boasting that the United States is basically apprehending Iranian commercial ships, calling them black fleets, and saying we're going to pursue them all over the world with our Navy. Okay, I mean, and accusing Iran of piracy while the U.S. are the biggest pirates right now on the planet, using the U.S. Navy as basically a privateer force, a naval force, on behalf of the State of Israel, which is basically what they're doing.

So that, and ratcheting up sanctions at the same time by the United States, again, another act of war. So in terms of the Strait of Hormuz, again, what people need to understand is quite simple: from an international law point of view, the United States has not a leg to stand on. If you look at the International Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982, two countries did not ratify that international treaty. One of them was Iran. Iran did not ratify that convention, so they did not opt into that. And guess what the other country that did not ratify it was? That would have been like freedom of movement through all waterways, etc. Iran said no. They reserve the right to exercise control over their near abroad, the Strait of Hormuz.

The United States did not ratify that either. So legally, the United States doesn't have a leg to stand on in terms of maritime law, firstly. Secondly, both Iran and Oman extended their territorial waters over the last 50 years to basically the point where they're both touching each other in the Strait of Hormuz. So there is no sort of daylight in terms of international waterways there. That's the second thing. Third, this is a war situation. Iran is at war. The U.S. and Israel declared war on Iran. Even if they didn't do an official declaration, they undertook an undeclared war of aggression against a sovereign state, a sovereign UN member state.

So because of that, and in the laws of war and precedent, Iran is well within its rights until this conflict is resolved to take control of the Strait of Hormuz, until such a time where there is some kind of an interim accord and eventually a treaty. It's very simple. So back to the original point, Nima, the inability of the United States to be agreement-capable, especially this Trump administration. But

Biden had this problem as well with regards to Russia, the U.S. and Russia, and all of their various agreements and anything in Ukraine. So Trump is even worse by, like, orders of magnitude. So that means that they cannot resolve the situation. Now, Trump and they will turn around and say, well, it's not our problem.

We don't, we don't recognize international law. We're the USA. Well, actually, no, the United States, what they have opted into in terms of the Geneva Conventions and all of these other international treaties, and to do with, like, let's say, for instance, they're saying now they're giving the order that they're going to fire on Iranian boats and kill them all, basically. That's against U.S. law because the United States adopted all of these things after World War II that would constrain the U.S. military and constrain the U.S. from doing what everyone was doing during the time before that, which is committing heinous acts of war. That's why all these conventions were put into place and ratified by the U.S. Congress. Ratified by the U.S. Congress. So that's the law of the land under the Supremacy Clause of the United States law and Constitution.

So that's mandated. So to opt out of this, you have to undo all of that legislation in the U.S. So Trump is completely out of U.S. law, in violation of U.S. law. So it's illegal by the American legal standard, and it's illegal internationally, what they're doing. And they have no claim whatsoever in terms of telling Iran what to do with the Strait of Hormuz, and Iran has every right to do what it's doing internationally. So all indications, Nima, are the failure of negotiations, the inability of the U.S. to act as a normative power in the international system, and then the threats by this administration, and also the movement of U.S. military assets and another carrier strike group coming around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, heading towards the Indian Ocean.

I believe that's the USS George H.W. Bush and that strike group joining two other strike groups, one of which is already in the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea in that area, and the other coming from Greece in the northern Red Sea, the USS Gerald Ford, which, funny enough, I don't know if it's going to go any further south through the Bab al-Mandeb Straits. That's also a problem. But more likely, it's going to provide potential assistance for Israel in defending Israel, but also to defend the port of Yanbu, Saudi Arabia's petrol line, the East-West pipeline that's used to bypass the Straits of Hormuz. That will be a target when hostilities resume by Iranian missiles.

So it looks like that carrier strike group includes not just the aircraft carriers, but the destroyers that are escorting it with missile interceptor capabilities. So it looks like they're preparing for war, Nima. And that's the inevitable outcome that we can come to here. And if they avoid war, if we avoid war in this case, it will be because they're extending to try to find something to do, some other way to kind of—Trump is all about micromanagement. He likes to micromanage and, you know, repaint the lines on the pitch as the game proceeds, you know, change the touchline on the field basically during the game. That's how Donald Trump rolls when he does things. And he thinks that somehow he'll find the magic formula there to get the deal he wants.

But this is not building, you know, an apartment complex in Manhattan. This is totally different. So Donald Trump is totally out of his depth. As an individual, he's well past his level of incompetence right now as President of the United States. And everybody in America knows this. He's the laughingstock of the world. He will go down in history as probably easily the worst U.S. President in the history of the country and that will ever be in the future as well. He has already etched—that's his legacy. He thinks that he's going to get an aircraft carrier named after him and a big statue of him in Washington. It's not going to happen. And it's for all those reasons that we have just outlined.

#Nima

I think the problem that he's facing is that his enemy has to help him to get out of it. This is the problem. We had the ceasefire, then he unilaterally extended the ceasefire. Iran somehow perceived what is going on with this game because they don't want to be in the game to help Donald Trump save face with what he's confronting right now. And then you see right now, you know, there is no way for Donald Trump unless Iran decides to help him. It's impossible. It's, you know, considering what is going on in Iran, you know, the nature and the way that they're talking about the conflict, there is no way for Donald Trump to save face.

And he's going to have a lot of difficulty. I think all the signs, as you've mentioned, show we are heading towards some sort of escalation, a new cycle of war, because Iran would prefer to have a war to put a lot of pressure, even making the case worse for Donald Trump, just not going in a direction to help him. This is the reality that he's facing. I don't know if he perceives that or he's trying desperately to do something else, because it doesn't seem that Iran is willing to play the way he wants Iran to play to help him.

#Patrick

I think probably on a subconscious level, he probably realizes he's been outmaneuvered. He's put himself into pretty much an unwinnable position. But like you said, he's trying to get Iran to help bail him out a little bit, to come to the negotiations table. But then maybe this has something—I mean, I'm not a psychologist here—but a sociopath will convince himself that there's a solution when subconsciously he's preparing to sabotage. Once they get the other person to the table to make a compromise, then he'll attack again. That's the basic mind of, you know, a malignant narcissist or, you know, a psychopath or serial killer or something like that. So that's kind of how Donald Trump's brain's wired—he will convince himself that he sincerely wants a solution, but then when he gets them to the table, he will then attack. And that's just in his nature.

He doesn't have the temperament or, I think, the intellectual depth or ability to do this job that he is in, sadly, that he was elected to do. And he's way out of his depth. He's put himself in a position where he's out of his depth. If he avoided war in the first place—the reason people elected this guy, this clown, this embarrassment, this train wreck of a man—the reason he was elected is because

people believed that he promised he wouldn't get the United States into any more stupid wars, especially in the Middle East. He actually was elected on that basis.

But we all knew as Americans, or at least those of us who were, you know, paying attention, knew that if he kept to those promises, he'd probably be okay focusing on the domestic political situation and, you know, just maintaining good relations with other countries and improving trade and so forth. But we got the opposite in the last year and a half. We've got literally the diametric opposite of all of those things. So he's not capable of getting himself out of this situation. Other forces have taken over his administration domestically now, and also the Israelis are really, I think, in total control of the White House right now. And they're even telling the U.S.—Israel Katz, the defense minister, is basically saying, "We're going to be attacking Iranians."

We're going to be killing Iranians. And the United States is almost sending a signal to the U.S. that you're going to have to back us up because we're going to attack again. So that's what the defense minister is saying there. Meanwhile, Trump's just vacillating. He can't decide what his own narrative is—whether it's, oh, we've got to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons, oh, they're killing their own people, oh, they're about to hang these eight women and I just intervened to stop it, something was going to take place. And then he's saying that. Now he's saying, well, higher gas prices, economic depression, that's a price you're going to have to pay because I just saved you from Iran getting a nuclear weapon.

So he's saying, do you want to have a nuclear-armed Iran or high gas prices, basically? You have to choose. So you're going to take high gas prices, and we'll take care of Iran's nukes. So he's creating a straw man argument. This is like a level of propaganda nobody has ever seen before in America. And let me tell you, America, this is one of the most propagandized societies in the history of the human race. We have a propaganda machine in America that is the most awe-inspiring, powerful, you know, massive manufacturing-of-consent disinformation machine that the world has ever known. I mean, it is really immense. And what they're pushing out now is something that nobody that I've spoken to has ever seen in their lifetime.

I mean, Pete Hegseth, this news presenter that's been put in charge of the Pentagon, he basically comes out in the press conference today and says—or yesterday, yesterday afternoon, I think—but he says, you know who deserves the Nobel Peace Prize? The U.S. military deserves the Nobel Peace Prize because we're keeping the world safe. The world just doesn't appreciate us. We should get it every single year. The U.S. military should get the Nobel Peace Prize. So you can't underestimate the level of delusionality here and just pure sociopathy by these people who are mediocre in terms of their ability to perform the jobs into which they've been installed.

And you're seeing the results now. It is just a train wreck, the likes of which nobody's ever seen before. And we're all just praying that these people don't blow up the world. We're just praying at this point that Donald Trump or the Israelis don't pull the nuclear card in order to rescue themselves, to get themselves out of the mess they created. And the global economy, I mean, I don't even want

to go there, Nima, because right now the global economy is already hitting the wall. You're already seeing Southeast Asia, fuel shortages, business shutdowns. You're going to start seeing bankruptcies, liquidations.

There are whole manufacturing sectors that are shut down. It's like COVID-level, system-level perturbations. That's already happening. That will eventually come west now because the paper market of futures trading and derivatives and all this stuff is now converging with the material reality on the ground, because all of the reserves are expended in terms of oil, floating gas reserves, and so forth. So pretty much the real price is going to emerge, and the market will do its corrections. And right now, jet fuel shortages globally. I mean, this is going to be everything from transportation, delivery, employment. So we're looking at a global recession right now, as of this week.

And if this continues, if they keep messing around with this unwinnable war, this disaster, then we're looking at a global depression, which will begin well and truly, probably a lot quicker than people think, but it will start hitting hard in June. Maybe they have the month of May to sort of stay in la-la land. Everybody in America can go to their barbecues and pretend that nothing's happening because the U.S. is energy independent. But that's not going to save all the supply chains that are right now being absolutely obliterated by what the United States and Israel have done to the world, which is to start this war, which they thought was going to be over in a week.

And here we are. And Donald Trump says, oh, it's only been four weeks. No, no, Donald. It's not been four weeks. It's not been six weeks. We're already into month number three as of this next week. So he's even trying to underestimate. Again, it's just typical of this president trying to downplay his own catastrophic errors and try to sell this as some kind of a win. This is really going to blow up in his face and in the face of the U.S. government, and it's going to create a political crisis going up into the midterms. I think it's just really a catastrophe gaining steam right now.