

Col. Larry Wilkerson: Trump's Own Advisors Now SPLIT on Iran

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Tuesday, April 28, 2026, and our dear friend, Col. Larry Wilkerson, is here with us. Welcome back, Larry.

#Larry

Good to be with you, Nima. I heard this morning that the Brazilians are getting irritated with you.

#Nima

Why is that?

#Larry

I heard that Bolsonaro was on the lookout for you. No, just someone who had—I think he's been to Brasília, but most of his time was in Rio de Janeiro. And he was saying, that guy you do podcasts with from Brazil, he's pretty good. I said, yeah. So he better watch out. They're going to get him from the right.

#Nima

Could be. Yeah, his son is going to be the candidate for the opposite party against Lula and see what happens.

#Larry

What's his first name?

#Nima

The guy? Yeah, the son?

#Larry

The son.

#Nima

I just forgot his name. Let me check.

#Larry

That's all right. Not important. I just wanted to...

#Nima

I forgot his name, but it's his son, and he's going to run against Lula. And let's see what happens.

#Larry

We all seem to just go back and forth, you know—right, left, left, right.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. Larry, let me start with what has happened. I want to talk about many things concerning the conflict, the war between Iran and the United States, and the recent visit of the Iranian foreign minister to three countries: Pakistan, Muscat in Oman, and then Moscow in Russia. But before going there, what is your understanding of what has happened, you know, in that event and at the White House Correspondents' Dinner? The way that this is the third time someone has tried to assassinate—I don't know if he wanted to assassinate Donald Trump, actually. Yeah. How do you understand the whole case of these sorts of attacks?

#Larry

Well, I think it's being handled miserably poorly by the press in this country. I haven't read it all to be sure, but principally the press, and particularly the visuals. I went to that dinner twice, 2003 and 2004, as an invited guest. I think once I was invited by MSNBC and the other time I was invited by CNN. So I had a ticket in my hand, and a government sedan on one occasion and a taxi on another occasion took me to the door—the Capital Hilton, I think it is. And I got out, I showed my ticket. The ticket was looked at. People have said no one looks at the ticket. Well, my ticket was looked at, and I went in. And when I went into that cavernous hotel—I mean, it is huge.

You could look down the lane, as it were, the aisle, the main aisle. And all along that aisle, and on the second and I think third floor, it was the same way, if I recall. You had MSNBC, you had Fox,

you had CBS, you had The Wall Street Journal, you had The New York Times, you had all manner. Now, this is 20 years ago. You didn't have some of the stuff now, but you had the media that was present in the country that was powerful at that time. BBC was there. And you went to each one, and you had a drink, and you had some pupus, and you'd talk with people and everything, or you went to the ones you wanted to. That's what most people did.

And no one knew and no one cared really about—I'm sure they probably did if they were asked about it—the security in that part of the hotel, because that's a hotel. It's a hotel just like any other hotel. You have maybe local security on each floor or something like that, but nothing that's garrulous or nothing that's ostentatious. So the idea that the hotel or the media people in their suites would have provided security is nonsense. I mean, maybe they will one day when we're all shooting each other and killing each other every minute of every day, which is incidentally something we seem to be headed for in this country. But that's preposterous to think they're going to pay for security for that.

So this idea that there should have been security in the corridors and in the rooms and everything is just pure nonsense. The security started if the president were going to be there, or the vice president, or some other Secret Service-affiliated individual. The security started with an airport-like walk-through metal detector just outside the main hall where the event was going to take place. And you got your purses searched. You got your body searched. If you binged on the machine, it was just like an airport, a little bit more serious than an airport. My wife, for example, protested one time because they took her pocketbook apart, literally. And she didn't look like a terrorist to me or whatever.

So there was security there. And then you went in and you sat down, and the doors were closed, and the Secret Service detail did its job in there. Now, my daughter was a Secret Service agent and a protective detail agent for part of her time. Her husband was a protective detail agent for part of his time with the Secret Service. So they critiqued it for me, and they said, yeah, the Secret Service didn't do this, they didn't do that, they were chasing down the hallway, that sort of thing. But basically, it was in accordance with the way it was supposed to be done. So all this criticism of the security element with respect to the president and the room is, I think, nonsense. Maybe there was some sort of stupidity out in the hallways when they were chasing people and shooting people, or shooting at people.

But the big question comes to my mind when I read in the New York Times, I think it was, and you probably saw this too, that there were 300,000 people who registered their idea that this was all a setup. It was all fake. 300,000 people. That's a lot of people to say, yeah, to a major newspaper that this was a fake job. So that tells you, I don't care whether it was or not, but that tells you what the American people think about Donald Trump at this time — that he would not put that past himself or his wife or J.D. Vance or anybody else to stage something like that. And then you've got the

question that arose also in these queries with people who were asking, well, what about the first one? And what about the second one at the golf course? How come we haven't heard anything about these people? Haven't heard anything about the status of the cases.

Is this all a setup job every time Trump needs to divert attention from his problems? Like Epstein, or like the Iran war, or like both? I think that's the phenomenon that's really amazing me right now — that Americans would question this to such a significant degree in terms of its genuine nature. This is the con man, after all, one input said. This is a con man. This is a con. This is another one of his cons. I don't know whether it is or not. And I don't know that someone didn't really try to shoot him, and it wasn't the person they have in custody right now. But it certainly is a commentary on this presidency to see all the things that are running around, circulating about this president. It's alarming in the sense that I think he's going out, and he's going out so fast that we might not even get to the midterms without some untoward policies and actions taking place.

#Nima

Larry, the other details about what has happened are what our friend, our mutual friend, Larry Johnson, mentioned in our latest talk on his podcast. I watched it. I watched it. He said, why did they try to save the vice president first?

#Larry

Good question.

#Nima

Why is that?

#Larry

Some of the people wrote in that, too. And it could have been—I think it was my daughter that said this morning, well, he was closest at hand, and they moved to the most likely, quickest-to-reach target. They did get to the president eventually. But J.D. Vance was closer to the particular agent who acted so quickly. I don't know. I don't know.

#Nima

But there were two exits. J.D. Vance went out the right side, and Donald Trump went out the left side.

#Larry

Yeah.

#Nima

So there is no, you know?

#Larry

And you would think that now they might have briefed SOP — you go that one, you go that one, and we'll be with you. I don't know. Or they might have gotten it, one of them might have gotten it confused. Or they might, you know, they might've decided that it was best to have two exits rather than one — one for the, excuse me, one for the VP and one for the P.

#Nima

Larry, getting to the war, to the situation between Iran and the United States — Donald Trump, moments ago, just two hours ago, posted on his social, mentioning that Iran, they called me, they just called me. Iran has just informed us that they are in a state of collapse. They want us to open up the Strait of Hormuz as soon as possible as they try to figure out their leadership situation. I talked with Professor Randi earlier today. I talked with him. I said, who's communicating with Donald Trump?

He said that maybe Jared Kushner, from the next room, is calling Donald Trump and talking with him. It seems as though Iranians are talking to Donald Trump. And this is just getting somehow tragic, if not ridiculous. Every time he puts out something—he's the President of the United States, by the way—and he should consider this sort of responsibility for himself, but he doesn't care about that. He's putting everything out, and it turns out that everything he puts out basically is a lie. What is that? Well, the only way he can handle—Laura Loomer can handle, Jared Kushner can handle...

#Larry

JD Vance can handle, to a certain extent, Marco Rubio—any of this group can handle the propaganda that they put out, because it's almost always propaganda, as if they control it. And Donald Trump is at the peak of that clownish approach to diplomacy. Americans need to understand—and I doubt that they do—that the number one diplomat in the United States of America, as Colin Powell used to say, indeed as John Kerry used to say, as George Marshall used to say, the number one diplomat is the President of the United States. He commissions all the others. He writes a letter commissioning them to be a diplomat for America and gives them the conditions of their service, and so forth. And some presidents actually take a close look at that letter and amend it accordingly to their wishes, and so forth.

But basically, what that letter does is charge them, in the name of the President, to be representatives for the United States. They can even avoid the Secretary of State and go straight to

the President if they want to. Now, most smart diplomats, ambassadors, and others are not going to go that route. They're going to go through the Secretary of State to the President, or they're going to go to the President at the same time they're informing the Secretary of State what they're going to say. I mean, that's the way they do it because that's just a gentleman's way of doing business. But that's how powerful that letter is. It charges them and tells them, come to my office if you need to. And there have been occasions where an ambassador has gone in to the President of the United States without the Secretary of State knowing about it.

And, you know, you take your chances there. If you're a political appointee, no big deal because the President appointed you. The Secretary of State didn't. And so you can get away with that stuff. You're a billionaire. You gave \$400 million to the President for the campaign or whatever. We had an ambassador in Italy who actually sent the cable in. I was the first one to see it. He bought a new embassy, Nima. He didn't like the embassy in Rome, so he bought a new embassy. I think it was \$400 million he paid for it, and he informed us. He was a very wealthy donor. He was a political appointee, of course, by the President, and he bought us a new embassy. Oh, fine. He just saved us \$400 million. I don't know if ultimately he did.

So these people act in the name of the President. Well, we don't have any of that going on now. There's no one who even understands that. I doubt Marco Rubio could tell you what I just told you. I doubt very seriously that he could tell you what I just told you. So Trump makes policy by tweets. Trump makes policy by midnight dreams. He makes policy through Laura Loomer. He makes policy through Kushner and Whitcoff. And no one coordinates it. No one coordinates it except, like, the spokesperson. It's coordinated in this way: whatever you say must make me look really good. Press your bosoms out, show that Christian cross, and make me look good. I don't care how many lies you have to tell—make me look good. And that's the way they do it. And so who knows who Trump is talking with? Who knows who's talking to Trump, really?

But I would suspect that a lot of this is on a script in Trump's head, or on a script in Stephen Miller's head, or on a script in somebody's head. And they're ticking it off as they go along, trying to set the Iranians, the Russians, and everybody else up with the comments that supposedly emanate from the president. But I'd also bet you that 90% of them don't emanate from the president. They come from some people who are charged around him with keeping everything confused, keeping it looking as if things are going according to Trump's wishes when they aren't, and keeping it looking like we're actually conducting diplomacy, which we are not. That's how they work. I know it's unbelievable. It's flat unbelievable. I don't think there's ever been an administration like this. I don't mean just in America—in the freaking world.

#Nima

Larry, Iranians feel that the second round of war, the third round of war, is coming. And you see how they're sending more weapons to the Middle East, to these bases in the UAE and in Qatar. You feel that that's coming. But on the other hand, we've heard that some generals are sending

messages, some sort of mixed message to Donald Trump, and they're trying to say this is not the way, or your objectives are not achievable on the battlefield if you go with another round of war. What is your understanding of what's going on with the generals or the people who are around him, who have access to Donald Trump, who can communicate with Donald Trump?

#Larry

Well, first of all, none of the generals have any access to Donald Trump other than Keane, period. Now, there might be some people like Keane and retired generals who are very much on the MAGA side of everything who have access to him. But I kind of doubt that, too, because I don't think even Trump would allow that. They might have contact with him through people like Loomer, like Miller, like Vought, and others like that. But I don't think they have direct contact with him. Keane is the only one—no, not Keane, Kane is the only one—who really has legitimate contact with him. Even another member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should not be talking to the president unless it's completely condoned by Hegseth and by the chairman. So that's the rule. And I don't think Trump is violating those rules in any significant way.

Now, there might be other members of the administration who are going around Hegseth and talking to a military member. This is what I'm hearing. What he's hearing from a part of the military, that part which I would call smart, wise, and circumspect, is that he should shut this down as soon as possible. That we have made a grievous mistake. They don't put it that way, I don't think. No one's going to tell Trump he made a grievous mistake. But shut it down as soon as possible. The smarter of them are saying we've accomplished our objectives. We've got the Strait where we want the Strait. We'll work something out—international law, whatever. We'll work something out for an agreement. We'll get the Strait open again. We'll satisfy whatever Iran wants with respect to the Strait as the Strait, as an international waterway for passage of ships.

But here's what I think is going on that is affecting Trump. There are people who are saying—and they're not saying it this way—I'm going to say it bluntly: listen, what you want is a nuclear agreement. You want a nuclear agreement that is better than the JCPOA. You want to be able to hold that agreement up and flag it in front of the American people and say, look what I got. It's better than anything Kerry and Obama got. This is what we need. This is what we went to war for. This is what we've got. Now we can call it off. Now we can quit because we won. And that'll be the new JCPOA. And all the critics, rightfully so, will say, well, you had that years ago and you're the one who vetoed it. And he'll say, no, no, I got a longer moratorium.

I got this included, that included. I got the uranium moved away to Russia or wherever for five years, whatever. Anyway, there'll be enough new aspects to this deal that the Iranians will accept, I think, and that Trump will accept. He'll declare victory and walk away from it. That leaves the big issue, and the military has brought this up. That leaves the big issue of Bibi Netanyahu and what he

is doing in Lebanon right now, which is in large part to spite Trump, I think, because Bibi can't do what he wants to do in Iran, or at least it appears he doesn't want to start it again. I'm hearing from other people in Israel that he is going to start it again.

But I don't know what he's going to start it against—bomb the same targets again, bomb hospitals and schools, bomb everything in sight. That's what I'm hearing that he wants to do. He wants to go after Iran like he's going after Lebanon, with no holds barred, bombing everything in sight and just continuing again and again and again. Well, to do that, he's got to get bombs from us, and he's got to get fuel from us, and he's got to get other things from us. So there is leverage there for Trump if he wants to keep that from happening, particularly if he keeps up his pace in Lebanon. And his pace in Lebanon is absolutely deadly right now. He's killing everything that moves in Lebanon, including UN peacekeepers, including just innocent Lebanese civilians.

I don't know how much longer this can keep up before he is absolutely banned from ever being in any place other than Israel in the world. But that's what he's doing. So that's what Trump wants to do, though. That's what I'm hearing, and that's what the military is supporting. Declare victory and leave. And declare victory around that piece of paper you can wave to the American people and say, I got a better deal on the nuclear issue. And after all, that's what I was really after, better than Obama did. And call it quits and leave. Again, what does Israel do? That's a huge question. And what does Iran do with respect to Israel? Does Iran take what will probably be a codicil to this agreement and stop sending rockets and missiles into Israel and instruct Hezbollah to do so too?

I'm not sure Hezbollah would obey them. But let's just say they would for a minute. Does Iran do that in conjunction with this, you know, Trump declaring victory and leaving? Because it won't look much like a victory if that doesn't happen too. I don't know. I don't think he has that kind of control over Netanyahu, nor would he have it over Bennett and Lapid should they beat Netanyahu in the upcoming election, if it happens. So I think that's still a huge question: what does Israel do, even to this plan recommended by the saner people in the military in the US? If this plan seems to be working, what does Israel do to spoil it? I think that's a huge question.

#Nima

I think you're pointing out something so crucial and important, which is related to what Iran is talking about right now with the updated proposal on their part. They're trying to... This proposal is in three steps. The first step is going to be to put an end to the war on all fronts, basically talking about Iran and Lebanon. Without achieving the first step, they're not going to go to the second step, which we described before.

#Larry

That was one of the ten points too, really, if you read it closely.

#Nima

It was point number one in that ten-point plan.

#Larry

Yeah.

#Nima

But how? Because it's impossible right now, the way Israel is behaving in the southern part of Lebanon. They basically are occupying the southern part of Lebanon. They're not going to leave there.

#Larry

Yeah. And unless Trump is willing to put his foot down, I think we're stuck with that. And that seems to me to be a showstopper in terms of a final settlement or Trump declaring victory and getting out. You can't very well do that if Israel is still there and Hezbollah is still very much knocking the crap out of them every day. And that's why they're doing this. That's why they're doing this. I mean, they've always wanted to destroy Lebanon. They've always wanted to, you know, every 10 years they do it anyway. Now they prefer, as they did in '82 really, to just destroy it, completely destroy it, occupy it, treat it just like East Jerusalem, just like the West Bank, just like they'd like to treat Syria, but they got preoccupied. And Netanyahu sees this as a route to do that, and he's not going to give up until he's— and he's getting angrier. You can see it. He's getting madder and madder every time he gets a report from the IDF that says, "Dude, we're getting ripped up."

#Nima

I don't know if there is any sort of difference between Benjamin Netanyahu and the opposition, which means Naftali Bennett together with Yair Lapid. Are they as Zionist as Netanyahu? Because looking at the Israeli population, Israeli people right now, more than 78% of the people support Benjamin Netanyahu in their operations in Israel, in Gaza, in the West Bank, in the southern part of Lebanon. And how can these people be changed or somehow have their opinion modified? Is that possible? Or is it something the United States needs to do by force on the Israelis?

#Larry

I think it was Nebuchadnezzar II who finally delivered Jeremiah's prophecy—razed the temple to the ground, killed a whole bunch of Israelites, and then put the rest of them into captivity. I think that's what it would take. Who is Nebuchadnezzar II? Who is going to do that to Israel? Who is going to teach Netanyahu and those Israelis you readily identified and accurately identified a lesson like

Nebuchadnezzar did? Put them in the wilderness for, what, 50 years, half a century. That's what they deserve. That is precisely what they deserve. And I would have been reluctant to say that months ago, especially right after October the 7th, because I didn't understand what you just told me.

I've understood for some time now that the Israelis are behind Bibi Netanyahu. They don't like him because he's done all kinds of things to their government. They don't like him because he's a criminal. They don't like him for other reasons. They just don't like his wife too, but they are 100% behind what he's doing. Every bomb that drops, every rocket that falls makes them more adamant in that position. And that's, you know, they're proof of the whole concept that bombing doesn't change anybody's mind. It just makes them more resolute and more willing to take what you're handing out and to withstand it. That's what it does. It makes them angry.

#Nima

I think that's part of human nature. When you lose your brothers, your sisters, your father, your mother, then you're part of the fight. It doesn't matter.

#Larry

President Aoun needs to watch very carefully in Lebanon because they're going to do that to the Lebanese, regardless of whether they're Christian, Islamic, or Druze. It won't make any difference. They're all going to be angry because they're all getting bombed and they're all getting killed.

#Nima

Larry, putting aside the first step, which would be, as we've mentioned, putting an end permanently to the war between Iran and the United States and between Lebanon and Israel. The second part would be who's going to talk, who's going to be able to talk with the Iranians. I haven't seen anybody in the Trump administration capable of doing that.

#Larry

Nor am I. That's one of my deep concerns, and not just about this, but about many other things too. We have no diplomats. We have no diplomats. We fired all those who even vaguely resemble diplomats at the State Department. We've hired a whole bunch of political hacks. I'm told it's up as high as 40% of the ambassadorial staff now as political appointees. That's probably as high as it's ever been. And I'm told that of those, maybe one or two might be competent to drink tea or milk with their counterpart. That's about it. The rest of them are just interested in using their position to make money in whatever country they happen to be in and to build contracts and business contacts and such.

So Trump hired a whole entourage of people who are just like him in terms of his diplomats. So we have no diplomats. Therefore, we have no diplomacy. And at the top of that, as I indicated at the top of this show, the number one diplomat is the president of the United States. The president of the United States is a grifter, a real estate tycoon who cheated almost everyone he ever dealt with, and a person whom every New York taxi driver I've ever had drive me around New York said, "I can't stand that man. He's a crook. He's a mafioso." That's without exception. I have not had a taxi driver in New York City who didn't say that about Donald Trump. I'm sure there must be one somewhere, but taxi drivers always know the truth.

#Nima

You're totally right in that way. Larry, we know that the second trip of the Iranian foreign minister after Islamabad was to Moscow. They were basically talking about the second step of the plan that Iran proposed to the United States, which is the Strait of Hormuz. And they're talking with the Omani government to manage and define a mechanism for the Strait of Hormuz. How do you see the communication? And this trip is a tour. He said it's a tour with our neighbors. He said, I want to communicate—Iranian Foreign Minister Arafat said, I want to communicate with our neighbors: Pakistan, Oman, and then Russia. How do you find the way that Iran is—one of them is in Islamabad and then Moscow, and later on going to Moscow?

#Larry

Well, I think Oman is the true good offices country in the region. They have been that for a long, long time. Without Oman, we would never have had half as much success in almost every arena, whether it was the Gulf Cooperation Council or dealing with Riyadh or any of the states in the region, even Egypt to a certain extent, if it hadn't been for Oman's ability to exercise its role as the diplomat interested only in peace. And I commend them for that. And Powell used to say that about them, too. They were usually unsuccessful, and the usual monkey in the works was Riyadh. More than anything else, Riyadh was the disturber of the peace, if you will, and that capital with which the Omanis found it very difficult to work.

Sometimes it was the Emirates, sometimes other places, but most often it was Riyadh. And you must remember, too, that the Omani foreign minister—I believe it was the foreign minister, not the deputy, it was the foreign minister—he actually said the problem in the region is not Iran. The problem is Israel. For the first time out of an Arab's mouth came the truth: the problem is Israel. I wish more people had been listening, particularly in his own vicinity, but also globally. The problem is Israel. So I understand why they went there. Plus, I believe they would be the partner in managing the strait. It just makes sense from a geographical point of view.

It also makes sense, well, the other countries that have a dog in the fight, a portion of the Persian Gulf on the western side, they would have a dog in the fight too. But I think Oman is the principal country here, because if you look at that strait, right at its most critical point, that's Oman, and this

is Iran. So, I mean, even if you got the Secretary General and others, and I keep pushing this, I keep saying, if you use the Law of the Sea Treaty, if you use, in other words, international law, I know Iran's not a signatory, we're not a signatory, but that doesn't mean squat. Ninety percent of the world virtually is a signatory.

If you want to reinforce international law, here's a great place to start doing it. Use that treaty as it defines straits—international straits in particular—and as it defines the land adjacent to those straits and the responsibility of the countries who overlook the straits and have the most military proximity to them, like Turkey, for example, and those critical ones up at the Hellespont. Then you've got real weight behind what you're doing. And you could use this even though they're not signatories—we and Iran aren't signatories—you could use this to resurrect some aspect of effective international law. And I said, how can Iran, for example, stand up and say, you don't recognize that we're a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We are a member of the Additional Protocols and the safeguards. We're fully vested in the civilian nuclear regime.

And then say you don't like the Law of the Sea Treaty. Well, that's Ahmadinejad. That's Ahmadinejad speaking. You should be consistent. Now, I realize we're inconsistent as hell. We haven't approved a treaty in 40 years—virtually that long. So if you brought that back and you had a Secretary General who had some courage, and you used that as your negotiating starting point as to how straits like that are defined and how they're supposed to be used, how they're supposed to be secured, and so forth, you'd at least have a starting point that sort of brought international law back into the arena again. Now, when I said that on a podcast earlier today, the individual on the other side, just as expert as I am in this business, he said, you're not going to bring international law back. You've destroyed it. I said, point made. You have a point.

We have destroyed international law. We, the empire, we've destroyed it. But that doesn't mean that the rest of the world, particularly the UN, can't defy us and bring it back into the battle and bring it back as parameters around which—let's let other people discuss it. Let's let the littoral states in the Persian Gulf discuss it. Let's let Iran majorly discuss it. Let's let Europe discuss it. Let's let the Mediterranean powers discuss it. Let's let everybody that wants to get this thing back open and get the passage restored discuss it. Screw the empire and screw its navy. Talk about it. Delineate it, and then say to the world, this is it. We're going to bring it to a vote in the UN Security Council. And when the Perm 5 vetoes it, there will only be one country doing it. It'll be the United States. And we'll show them for what they are.

#Nima

How do you find, Larry, the partnership or the relationship between Iran and Russia? Iran goes to Russia because they want to communicate the latest sort of advancements or talks concerning the war with the Russian president.

#Larry

Well, after that press conference that I listened to three times with Putin, I said to myself, the first call Donald Trump will make tomorrow morning is to Vladimir Putin. He will talk to him, and they will have an exchange. And Trump will want to know, what did you mean? And Putin will say, just what I said. And Trump will say, well, it sounded like you were almost taking Iran's side. And Putin will say, I was. And then it will go downhill from there. I don't know. I really don't know what they'll say. But I'd be willing to bet Trump's on the phone to Putin within the next 24 hours, because he will have seen this. They will have shown it to him, I think. And that's what Trump's presidency is all about.

What do they show him? What do they tell him? Do they hide it? I think they do, a lot of times, especially Hegseth. Hegseth right now is hiding all kinds of assessments from his on-the-ground commanders that say, you need to stop this. Boss, you need to stop this. This is not going the way you planned it to go. You need to stop this. So what's he going to do? Is he going to start a raft of firings? Is he going to fire his maritime commander? Is he going to fire his air component commander? Is he going to fire the overall CENTCOM commander? Is he going to fire them all? Because I'm hearing they're all telling him this. So I don't know that Trump listens to people.

I don't know that they give him access to people like that. Maybe Hegseth won't let these people get anywhere near the president. So the message isn't getting through because Hegseth is stopping it. But I'd be interested to be on that phone call with Putin. You know, they're having the BRICS in India next month. They're having the BRICS meeting in India, and Modi's sort of hosting and officiating. And I just picked up the data on the new Indian—have you heard about this Agni-5 missile? This is a missile that goes 5,000 kilometers. If they extend the range, which they can do and have done in tests, it's 7,000 kilometers. It goes at—ready for this—top speed, 30,000 kilometers per hour.

This is probably the most powerful nuclear warhead-tipped missile in the world, if all these specs are accurate. And they came out of the—what do the Indians call it? They call it the DRDO, Defense Research and Development Organization. Three-stage, road-mobile, 5,400-kilometer range, with 7,000 kilometers extended range, 30,000 kilometers per hour. We're changing the whole nuclear world. We're changing everything, and we're doing nothing. We're doing nothing except chasing our tail out in Utah and New Mexico and other places where we have labs. And the world's treaty-less now. No treaties whatsoever. So here's India building this missile. What does India need this for, Nima? Tell me what India needs this missile for.

China's next door. Russia's big, but it's not 7,000 kilometers away. Moscow is certainly not 7,000 kilometers away. So what is India planning on hitting with this 7,000-kilometer-range, 30,000-kilometer-per-hour nuclear warhead-tipped missile? Only one target makes any sense to me. It ain't going after the DPRK. And we're letting all this go on with no input whatsoever. I bet you we don't even have anybody going to the BRICS meeting in India. I hope I'm wrong. I hope I'm wrong. I

hope some low-level ambassadorial potential candidate, someone with a brain, is going and is going to take good notes. Because you just might be taking notes on the demise of the American empire in spades.

#Nima

This is the mere outcome of what Donald Trump has done so far.

#Larry

I'm telling you, he's somebody's agent. He's providing agency for somebody, maybe some power out there on Mars or something. Maybe some other civilization has dropped in and put a dime in Trump's box and said, I'll pay you real estate fees for 1,000 years and guarantee you life for that whole period if you'll be my agent. I don't know any other way to interpret it. It's very strange. It's very strange. How would you like to be the president who presided over the demise of the American empire in an accelerated fashion in the 21st century? Yeah, sign me up.

#Nima

There was another meeting, Larry, in Kyrgyzstan. It was Pakistan, Russia, and Iran — they're going there. But there was a bilateral meeting between Russia and Iran in which Iran's deputy defense minister, in that meeting, said that America is no longer in a position to dictate its policies to independent nations. And the other point that he brought up is that today Iran, while preparing for a powerful defense and meeting the needs of its armed forces, is ready to share its defense and military capabilities with independent countries, especially the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This is, you know, Larry, it's not just about the war in Ukraine. I think the policies of two administrations in the United States — the Biden administration and right now the Trump administration — have forced Russia, forced Russia to improve their military-industrial complex.

#Larry

Yes.

#Nima

And they're in the same process of doing that to Iran because they see that there is no point in negotiating or having any sort of talk with the United States. You have to build up your military to communicate with the United States. This is the outcome. This is the way they see what's going on on the battlefield.

#Larry

I think you're right. And as far as the -stans go — Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan — all those countries that are awash now with the power that China's magnet has pulled toward the east are going to be right there with them. Not because they were once SSRs of the Soviet Union, but because they see the reality of power shifting. And that reflects — you take out your map and look at the Caspian Sea and see how the Caspian Sea is essentially a lake, a huge lake, across which Russia can resupply Iran till hell freezes over, with no interference, because all the countries that are littoral to the Caspian Sea are on their side in this, or at least are neutral and not going to interdict the shipping.

So you could send everything you wanted to send. It's a reverse of what we did for the Soviet Union in World War II, along the Persian Gulf, through Iran, and on up into... Stalingrad would never have survived if it hadn't been for that supply chain. Now it's reversed. It's reversed in terms of direction, and it's reversed in terms of interested parties. The interested parties are those affiliated with the SCO, with Russia, with BRICS, and are very much, as you just pointed out, on Iran's side in this conflict for decades. Not for sentimental reasons, but for very understandable power reasons, they're on Iran's side.

And the main power reason is the demented power on the other side of the Atlantic that they see now cannot be dealt with. And you're right. They've seen it now for about 12 years. They've seen it with Trump, Biden, and Trump. And if they look back far, all the way to George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, they'll see it there too. It just wasn't quite as visible. And now it's really gone amok, and they're not happy with that. So you only have one thing that happens when such occurs in the world, and that is the rest of the world gangs up on the bully and takes care of them.

#Nima

Yeah. Larry, Iran is looking at Eurasia, looking at the projects between Iran and China, between Iran and Russia. The location, the geography of Iran, is so important. And right now, with the Strait of Hormuz, before this war started, nobody was talking about the importance of the Strait of Hormuz in terms of the oil and gas, in terms of fertilizers, helium, and oil. It's a lot, just considering what is happening in the Strait of Hormuz. It's unbelievable. We never thought that.

#Larry

If you look at it as we did in that exercise I talked with you about earlier, in 2009 in Beijing, if you looked at all, as we did, the key straits in the world, and we also looked at key internal seas like the Caspian—because internal seas like that, that are so large, the Sea of Okhotsk, for example, on the eastern coast of Russia—we really looked at that one because that had real implications for war in the Pacific against the Soviets when we were planning that way. This is not the only one, in other words.

There are places around the world—I wrote a paper on this at the Naval War College—and I pointed out in that paper, oddly enough, how a small detachment of Marines, strategically inserted into these areas at critical moments with the right missile technology at their behest, whether it was carried on their person or with them in terms of combat, or it was orchestrated from space with satellites and so forth, could control the world. Could control the world just by being on these seven straits. Well, what we're finding out right now is that that's true about the Strait of Hormuz, but I would submit to you it would be the Bab el-Mandeb, it would be the Strait of Malacca, it would be almost any of these critical straits were it to be contested the way this one is now and were some power to try to gain full control over it. You'd have the same thing.

And we're looking at that in the future if we don't settle this one properly. That's the reason I think it's very important to bring back international law into this, because you're going to have this happen again with other straits. In that simulation, we started out with the Strait of Malacca. And that's more traffic than you can shake a stick at in the Strait of Malacca. If you block that, you're really doing a damn, damn. You can go around it, of course. You can, as some shippers did, but it's very costly to go around.

#Nima

Larry, in 1979, there was a revolution in Iran. And the people who did that, they were tired of manipulation, the foreign manipulation in Iran. And they said no. One of the first mottos and one of the first sort of talking points in those days was the independence of Iran. They didn't want to be dependent on the East or on the West. They said that in the initial years of the revolution. Then the war between Iran and Iraq started, and they saw how the West and the East all came to support Saddam Hussein against Iran.

That sentiment grew, and it got worse. And when we had the new leadership in Russia, I would say that has changed the nature of the relationship since the leadership of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, started in 2000 in Russia. He started, little by little, changing the sort of relationship, the nature of the relationship between Iran and Russia. Today, somehow, it's unbelievable. I'm looking at what is happening between Iran and Russia. I never thought they were going to be that close.

#Larry

No one in history did. I mean, anyone who knows the history of Iran and Russia for the last 500 years, let alone further than that, knows that the history was not good. Russia under Stalin, for example, was not good at all. If you go back to the Persian Empire and other empires that were adjacent to it, it was a different ballgame. But it's been a long time of antagonism. You're right. And fear—fear on Iran's part that Russia wanted to come south.

#Nima

Then Russia was not the Soviet Union anymore. Russia has changed a lot. Russia redefined itself, rebuilt itself.

#Larry

And we're still treating it like it's the Soviet Union. Yeah. But really, that's part of the problem—we're still treating it that way.

#Nima

I want to get to the point that you've just mentioned. You see how the states are changing in Iran, in Russia, in China. They're getting closer. They're getting better. And the sort of relationship is evolving into some sort of partnership. And the United States still has the same sort of old mindset of understanding what's going on within these countries. And nobody seems to care about having real, real experts on Iran, Russia, and China who understand the reality of these countries.

#Larry

Well, it's never been a forte. It's never been a strength of America. It really hasn't. You might say under Washington, possibly Jefferson, maybe Monroe, maybe Madison, there was a better appreciation because we had the opposite situation. We were a pipsqueak—a pipsqueak, as Washington said, that had all kinds of potential, but nonetheless a pipsqueak. And they were empires: French Empire, Spanish Empire, British Empire, Russian Empire. People forget we had the Russian Empire out west giving us some trouble every now and then. So at that time, you had to be skilled. You had to be skilled in diplomacy, and you had to be skilled in the art of the deal, if you will—the real deal—where you compromised with Spain in order to appease France, in order to appease Britain.

You had a little war here with Britain in 1812 and so forth. But you survived, and you survived on the backs of your diplomats as much as you did anything else. We don't care anymore. We don't do that anymore. We just do not do diplomacy. You either go our way, or you get bombed, or you get sanctioned, or both. And that is anathema to 60 to 70% of the world, which is now equal to us in combination—and maybe, in the presence of China, equal to us, period, as one nation equal to us. So it's changing, and we're not paying any attention to it. And now's the time to go back to diplomacy again. You need diplomacy much more when you're outnumbered and outgunned than you do when you have the imperial bloc. And we don't know how to do it. We just don't know how to do it.

#Nima

Larry, if I were to mention, you know, the main reason, because every time we're talking about the decline of the US empire, if I were to mention one reason for that, I would say this policy of a zero-sum game—that in each and every aspect of politics, when it comes to the economy of the United States, the way they want to put pressure, tariffs, sanctions—everything is about a zero-sum game. There is no alternative in the American leadership right now.

#Larry

That's the exact polar opposite of diplomacy.

#Nima

Yeah.

#Larry

You can't do diplomacy if you're always right. Diplomacy is about compromise, right? It's smart compromise.

#Nima

Yeah, smart compromise, but compromise. You win, you win, but you let your counterpart win as well.

#Larry

Iran gets to do whatever it wants to do with the Strait of Hormuz. It's reasonable, and the world's ships get to go through there. I mean, what's so hard about that? What's hard about it is Washington and, to a certain extent, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem.

#Nima

Yeah. Thank you so much, Larry, for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always. My pleasure. Talk to you on Friday.

#Larry

Yes, we'll have a two-some.

#Nima

Yeah.

#Larry

Take care.

#Nima

Take care, Larry. Bye bye.

#Larry

Bye-bye.