

# Col. Larry Wilkerson: Can Old Diplomacy Survive a Multipolar World?

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## #Nima

What has happened? I want to talk about many things considering 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. How do you understand the whole case of these sorts of attacks?

## #Lawrence

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 the principal 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 Capitol 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 hors d'oeuvres and, you know, you talked 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 walkthrough metal detector just outside the main hall where the event was gonna 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 mutual friend, Larry Johnson, mentioned in our latest talk.

## **#Lawrence**

I watched it. I watched it.

## **#Nima**

He said, why did they try to save the vice president first? That's a good question. Why is that?

## **#Lawrence**

Some of the people wrote in that too. And it could have been—I think it was my daughter who 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.

## **#Lawrence**

Left side, yeah.

## **#Nima**

So there is no, you know...

## **#Lawrence**

And you would think, 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 one of them might have gotten it confused. Or 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 Truth 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 the 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—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 basically everything he puts out is a lie. What is that?

## **#Lawrence**

Well, the only way he can handle, Laura Loomer can handle, Jared Kushner can handle, J.D. Vance can handle to a certain extent, Marco Rubio, any of his group can handle the propaganda that they put out—because it's almost always propaganda—is if they control it. And Donald Trump is at the peak of that clownish approach to diplomacy. You know, Americans need to understand—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 see 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.

## **#Nima**

Yeah.

## **#Lawrence**

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, you know, 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?

## **#Lawrence**

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 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 rules. 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, you know, going around Hegseth and talking to a military member. What he's hearing from—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 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. And 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 U.S.? 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. Yeah, without achieving the first step, they're not going to go to the second step, which we did trade before, and that was one, you know, that was one of the 10 points too, really, if you read it closely. Yeah, it was point number one in that 10-point plan. Yeah, and he—but how? Because it's impossible right now, the way that Israel is behaving in the southern part of Lebanon. They basically are occupying the southern part of Lebanon. We're not going to leave here.

## **#Lawrence**

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 modify their opinion? Is that possible, or is it something the United States needs to do by force on Israelis?

## **#Lawrence**

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.

## **#Nima**

It makes them angry.