

Pepe Escobar: China Humiliated Trump's Sanctions – Iran NOW Controls Hormuz

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Wednesday, May 6, 2026. And our dear friend, our brother, Pepe Escobar. From where, Pepe, are you joining us?

#Pepe

Yes, I'm still in paradise, Nima, in the Andaman Sea, on one of the islands. I'm here until the weekend, and then it's hardcore. It's going to be China, Russia, and NATO-stan in sequence. So I'm enjoying my last minutes here in peace and quiet, now with the storm every day. The storm came earlier today, so we're not going to have a storm while we're talking. The storm already came. And I have a question for you, Nima. Where's the war? Is the war over?

#Nima

I think the storm is coming. That's why I want to just destroy the calmness that you're living in right now. Let me start, Pepe, with the Iranian foreign minister going to China. I think when you look at what has happened recently, going to Russia and right now to China, and we know what's going on because Donald Trump is going to be in China, if I'm not mistaken, on May 15th. 14th.

#Pepe

14th. He's going to go there next Thursday. Yeah, Thursday next week. Yeah, I'll be there, but I'll be in Shanghai. I'll be following the whole thing from Shanghai. It's much more interesting.

#Nima

So let me zoom out a little bit. What is happening considering the big power policy as we are witnessing right now with Iran, Russia, and China on one side, and the United States on the other side?

#Pepe

Yes. Well, this week is particularly impressive, Nima, because last week we all remember that Araghchi went to St. Petersburg and he talked not only to Lavrov, but he was received by Putin and they talked for an hour and a half. What did we have today? Araghchi goes to Beijing, and he talks to Wang Yi for, I would not say an hour and a half, but over an hour. So this is something that I have been insisting on in my columns and on my podcasts for quite a while, for months, in fact. This is the RIC, the Primakov Triangle, revamped. When the great Yevgeny Primakov, as foreign minister of Russia in the late 1990s, came up with the idea of the RIC, which at the time many of us were calling the Primakov Triangle.

There was Russia, India, and China as the three main poles in Eurasia and for the integration of Eurasia. We can say that, I would say since the BRICS summit last year, and especially these past few months, and especially now after the fifty-something days of the war against Iran, the new RIC, the new Primakov Triangle, is definitely Russia, China, and Iran. Because these three are at the forefront of building a new system of international relations. Three BRICS members, three Shanghai Cooperation Organization members, and two of those are right behind Iran in the war. Not only with diplomatic support, but other forms of support, including military. Of course, these are state secrets. But we all know some of what the Russians sent to Iran and some of what the Chinese also sent to Iran.

And, of course, the most interesting thing is the invisible part of their military help to Iran. So it's not an accident. On the contrary, it may be seen as a coincidence or an accident, I'm sorry, by those idiots in Washington, that Araghchi goes to Russia and then goes to China to talk at the highest level. Because now we have something that turned the chessboard around again. Last week, we had Russia essentially telling Iran and telling the world at large. And then by phone, Putin telling Trump directly over the phone that Russia now is all in and Russia backs Iran. And if there's going to be, I would say, a semblance of a peace deal in the future, Russia will be involved. Today, we have the confirmation that China will also be involved.

And Iran and Araghchi and the leadership in Iran, starting with Ayatollah Morshava Khamenei, they want Russia and China to be, I would not say physically at the table, but spiritually and metaphorically, they will also be at the table physically for any sort of agreement that we might reach to end the war. But what happened these past few days is a roller coaster, Nima. We've seen it. It's completely nuts. We were almost on the verge of a restart of the war. We were, I would say, probably minutes away from the restart of the war. There was that whole UAE kabuki, which is still not clear what really happened. We know by now that it was a false flag. We can say, I would say, with 100% certainty, especially after the IRGC formally said it was not us.

We have nothing to do with that. So the UAE media, where there's no free media in the UAE—it's a bloody monarchic dictatorship based on slave labor. There's nothing liberal, not to mention free press, in the UAE. They start blaming Saudi Arabia. So now we have the possibility... not the

possibility—now we have blame for a false flag perpetrated by Saudi Arabia. But the most likely perpetrators are the usual suspects, and we know who they are. And they wanted essentially to restart the war and to have the UAE as part of the restart. After all, the UAE—what MBZ is doing with the UAE—is turning the UAE into an Arab Israel. And it's not by accident that many people in Iran are talking about the Hebrew states, the United Hebrew Emirates. I love this definition.

It is a United Hebrew Emirates because they are completely aligned with the Zionists. They are aligned with the Trump administration. They are aligned with the Zionists. They have enormous financial interests related to the Trump family and with those grifters around Trump. Investments in the American economy, \$1.4 trillion maybe, which is an immense amount. It's more than their sovereign wealth fund, in fact. Construction of data centers all across the UAE, buying loads of weapons from the U.S., and, of course, very, very close relations with the death cult in West Asia, to the point that at the beginning of this week, Netanyahu called MBZ. They were coordinating the next steps.

So we were really on the brink of a restart of the war. And then suddenly, Nima, out of the blue, we have the baboon of barbarians saying that Operation Epic Fuck-Up is no more. Of course, it's no more if Iran capitulates forever. What's in his mind is an Iranian capitulation. Otherwise, he will start bombing, bombing, bombing, bombing, bombing Iran again. So this is where we are now. He can change tomorrow. He can change in the next few days before his visit to China to meet Xi Jinping next Thursday and Friday, where he's going to arrive—very, very important. And this is the headline for all of us. And in fact, I want to title the column that I'm already writing. I started writing before talking to you, Nima.

Trump arrives in China with zero cards in his hand. And we could even say less than zero, especially after the failure of that last-minute non-blockade blockade, or half-blockade, or a derivation of the first blockade. We don't know how to call it. He called it Project Humanitarian, whatever, Freedom. That thing lasted less than two days because everybody could see that it was a joke. No insurance company, no tanker owner would dare navigate following the American instructions, which essentially are: money, territorial waters. And the Pentagon was basically saying, look, you go there, you turn off your transponder, and you pray. If you're lucky, you'll be able to cross. This was what the Pentagon was basically saying.

So nobody used that transit path. People were still trying to get the green light to go through Iranian territorial waters, you know, ask for permission, pay the toll, provide all the documents, blah, blah, blah. And the rules, of course, they're changing all the time. Now we have a Persian Gulf Authority. Fantastic. With a logo. Lovely. And the procedure, very detailed. And now it's email. I love it because now you can do everything by email. Pay in rials. So it's evolving on the Iranian side of the management of the Strait of Hormuz. Everything is evolving very fast. So they are streamlining the process and probably they have arrived at the final process. Probably it's going to stay like this for a while.

And then, of course, they will discuss with the Omanis how it's going to be. The Omanis are going to have their own toll booths on the other side. No problem. They have the right to as well. But this new juridical status of the Strait of Hormuz, that's it. It's not going to change. And it's not going to change on the negotiating table, assuming there is a negotiating table. So Trump arrives in Beijing with nothing. He launched a war where he lost in absolutely every vector of the whole picture. It's a comprehensive strategic defeat. Not a single objective from the beginning. The objectives at the beginning were completely absurd to start with.

They wanted decapitation, regime change, a color revolution lasting a weekend in Tehran, and a new story so they could go to Iran and take over natural resources and, of course, among other things, take over the Strait of Hormuz. Not only did they not get any of the above, virtually all their military bases across West Asia have been destroyed. About 90% of them are gone, and they're not coming back. Those Arab idiots are not so idiotic as to have that coming back, because in the future, once again, they would be bombed because of these military bases. And now they have to, I would say, coordinate how their conviviality with Iran is on completely new terms now.

And Iran, once again, now it's a big power. It's not only a big regional power in West Asia. Now it's a big power. Not at the level of the top three, but getting there. And everybody is going to have to live with it — the Global South and the Global North. So what Trump has been doing, especially these past 24 hours, is a reflection of his absolute incompetence and bewilderment, right? He canceled that so-called humanitarian project, blah, blah, blah, that crap, in less than two days because he saw that nobody bought it. And people could see that this was a bluff. So the regime, the management of the Strait of Hormuz, is not going to change. The situation in the whole Persian Gulf is going to be very—it's a completely different story.

And then comes the UAE question, which at the moment we could say is the more pressing one — how Iran is going to react to the fact that now they know for sure that the UAE was part of the war from the beginning. And the UAE collaborated on very targeted attacks against Iran throughout the war. So Iran has not even started to answer this question or to send messages. Because what happened with those ballistic missile volleys and drones, they were not Iranian. So Iran has not started to punish the UAE. It will happen. Well, it is already punishing in a sense, Nima, because the new map blocks UAE ports. So the UAE cannot export oil from Fujairah anymore.

They will have to ask for permission from the IRGC Navy on where to navigate, pay the tolls, you name it, which they refuse to do. Well, very simple. If you refuse to do it, you won't be able to export oil. Simple as that. So this is the most pressing question at the moment. And, of course, we don't know if this ceasefire, end of the war, whatever PR operation that Trump proclaimed from yesterday to today, we don't know if this thing is going to hold for the next few days or so, or if this is just another tactic so the Iranians are caught a little bit off guard, and then we have the restart of the war during the weekend. Anything is possible, Nima, as we know.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. What happened, I think, yesterday was significant — the attack on Fujairah. There are two ports in the UAE: Fujairah and the other one is Khor Fakkan.

#Pepe

Yes.

#Nima

Both of them were used to export oil, and the capacity was drastically reduced yesterday from 3.5 to 4 million barrels a day, reduced to 500,000 barrels a day. It's drastic. You know, they have the operation. I think whoever did that was successful. Not only that, together with the new map that Iran has introduced so far, they're just literally not going to be able to export that much oil from these two ports. And Pepe, when it comes to the case of the Strait of Hormuz, you've mentioned the new mechanism being defined by Iran. What we've learned so far is that the payment is going to be in rial? In rial. The issuance of guarantees would be within the Iranian banking system?

#Pepe

Exactly. Let me find... I'm trying to... I have zillions of stuff here. And when I want to find something, it's always... Please give me a second, Nima. I want to find the exact terms. No, it's not here. Oh God. So, okay. This, okay.

#Nima

Okay.

#Pepe

Maybe this one. Okay, just a second. I'm very sorry.

#Nima

Yes.

#Pepe

Okay. Here they are. Priority payment in rials. But this is interesting, Nima. When they say priority payment... probably there is a sort of escape clause that if you don't have rials, they might accept yuan. I think that's the case. Yuan will be the backup currency if it's very complicated for your

insurance company or the owners of the tanker or whatever to get Iranian rials. Number two, bank guarantee in Iranian banks. So this, can you tell me, Nima, if this is a complicated operation? How do you get a bank guarantee in Iranian banks? Can you do this online?

#Nima

Yeah, you can do this online. They have various applications to do that, and it's going to be so easy to get it. Easy, okay. If you use the online banking system, yeah.

#Pepe

Okay. Thank you. Okay, point number three. If a country has caused damage to Iran in the recent war, it must first pay the damages—wow—before obtaining passage permission. How is that? How are you going to ascertain what kind of damages, and how can you pay these damages? This is very vague. Okay, I'll give you a practical example: drones coming from the Sigonella base in Sicily, in Italy. This means Sicily, as a member of NATO, facilitated that. Will Italy have to pay damages, and how are they going to do that? So it's very complicated. In the case of the Persian Gulf neighbors, it's much, much easier. And I'm sure the Iranians have a list of everything that was targeted coming from bases in the Persian Gulf neighbors. But from Europe, it's going to be much more complicated. Anyway, this is point three.

#Nima

It seems that Italy, together with France and the United Kingdom, has to pay it.

#Pepe

Yes, because of course they're NATO members, but how are you going to identify it case by case? Are you going to attribute it to NATO in Brussels or to the individual nations? Well, I'm sure sooner or later they'll come up with a detailed procedure for all that.

#Nima

Because we don't have the document. We have some sort of a summary of the document.

#Pepe

You're right. So this should be billed to NATO in Brussels, in fact. They should send the bill to NATO headquarters in Mons, outside Brussels. This would be the right thing to do. And have a battery of international lawyers backing them up. Okay, so at least we know more or less the procedure. Ah, and this is my favorite. Point number four: in all documents, the correct title, Persian Gulf, must be written. This is brilliant. This is absolutely... Oh, hey, idiots, this is the Persian Gulf. It's not the

Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Trump, all that crap. Persian Gulf. It's always been like that. So there you go. So this is going to be on the table, Nima, assuming they start some sort of negotiation, probably after Trump's visit to China.

It's not going to happen later this week or early next week. Not yet. Only after he comes back from China. But theoretically, theoretically and apparently, and this is being spun—we don't know if it's true or not—they are working towards a one-page-only memorandum of understanding, which will be very, very vague, but it will be, let's say, the starting point of a long negotiating process. If, Nima, we get this memorandum of understanding in the next few days or early next week, I would say this is already a victory, considering where we were at the start of this week, when the restart of the war was practically inevitable. So why is this happening now? Desperation.

Not only desperation for everything that went wrong with this war of choice, but of course, he's going to China next week with less than zero cards. And what sort of pressure can he exercise over the Chinese? Less than zero once again. Can you imagine if he had a war going on on top of it? So in his mind, he took the war off the table to talk to the Chinese. But the Chinese are going to say, look, you started this war, you provoked this war, and today the key adjective the Chinese used after the meeting between Arakchin and Wang Yi is: this war is illegitimate. From a Chinese point of view, Nima, this is immensely serious because this means that everything related to the war is illegal. Everything, everything. So this is the Chinese starting point. By the way, it happens to be the Iranian starting point.

It is an illegitimate, illegal war, a war of choice. Illegal under any aspect of international law and the United Nations Charter, whatever, whatever, you know. So I'm sure Xi is going to make this to Trump face to face very, very clear. So we see that the approach by Beijing and the approach by Russia is slightly different. Let's say they progress in parallel. I'll give another example. Immediately after Arakchi, Lavrov, Putin—Putin picked up the phone, he called Trump, and he was basically saying, so this is what is not in the Kremlin transcript, and it was not leaked by Ushakov. This is the real, you know, the heart of the matter, which obviously cannot leak this way. Putin was giving a helping hand to Trump, essentially. That's why this call lasted over an hour and a half.

He explained the Iranian position in detail, knowing that Trump wouldn't—he cannot process this, it's too much information, and he doesn't know the dossier to understand what the Iranians want to do. Probably talked about the 14 points, not only the three major points, but the 14 points in detail. And then he said, look, if you're entertaining any ideas of ground invasion, going to Kharg, you know, sending destroyers to the Strait of Hormuz, don't do anything rash because your situation, your position after that is going to be infinitely worse than your position now, which is already horrible. So think seriously about your next steps. So I would say that two or three days after that, there was an impression that Trump did not get the message. Why? Because he launched this project—humanitarian, liberty, freedom, whatever.

#Nima

Operation Freedom, yeah.

#Pepe

Operation Freedom, assuming that everybody would love the idea that the Americans would be there to protect tankers crossing the Strait of Hormuz. But obviously, people who know the terrain—insurance companies, tank owners, you name it—they look at the map, they look at the situation, and say they're not going to be able to protect anything because they won't even get there in the first place. If they get near the Strait of Hormuz, they will be sunk, all of them. And the IRGC had already promised every day, "Okay, if you come here, that's it. This is your destiny." So it's no wonder that this thing lasted less than 48 hours, canceled by Trump himself. The failure was so spectacular that he just canceled it and forgot about it.

Okay, but he kept the previous blockade. The previous blockade technically is still there. But even the previous blockade is not blockading much, because as we all know, Nima, you know, our audience knows, they are very far away. They are in the Arabian Sea, in the southern Indian Ocean. They have to patrol an area of over 1,000 kilometers. They simply cannot do it. There are many ways to evade it. You can turn off your transponder. You can navigate close to Pakistani territorial waters. That's it. And it's no wonder—if you go to TankerTrackers, it's all there. It's back and forth all the time. But of course, he could not cancel both at the same time, so he canceled the second one, which was completely stupid.

But the first one theoretically is still there, but it's not blockading anything. And, of course, the consequences for the global economy continue. And that's the key worry for all of us and for everybody around the world. Because there is a trickle of tankers crossing the Strait of Hormuz and going especially to Asia. And most countries around here in Asia, they are desperate. Those that depend on energy from the Gulf, they are becoming now really, really desperate. So there's got to be some sort of movement to unblock the situation. The Iranians are ready to discuss the Strait of Hormuz on the table with the Americans. But it starts with the first point. There's a logical sequence.

We need written guarantees backed up by the guarantors, and that includes especially Russia and China, that there won't be another war against Iran and against the axis of resistance. If the Americans refuse that, there will be nothing to negotiate to start with. And they will never get to talk about Hormuz. And the nuclear dossier, it's the third stage. It's much, much, much further away. For Iran, it's not a priority. They can make some concessions on the nuclear dossier, but only if you solve the first one, which is the most important one. No more wars. But even that, Nima, okay, let me ask you. You are an Iranian negotiator. You get a written assurance by the United States government that they're not going to launch another war against you or against the axis of resistance, for that matter. Can you trust them?

#Nima

No way you can trust them.

#Pepe

No way. It's impossible.

#Nima

Yeah. Nobody seems to care about whatever document the Trump administration would sign at the end of this, you know, sort of conflict. But they know that this war is going to continue, in my opinion. And in some way, you know, you may mention that Donald Trump himself said that Operation Epic Fury is over. But in what sense is that over?

#Pepe

In what sense?

#Nima

It doesn't mean anything, in my opinion, because the war—I don't see the United States lifting the sanctions. I literally don't see that happening. They may release some frozen Iranian assets. That could happen, but that doesn't change the game. That doesn't change the face of the conflict. Just remember, Pepe, before the United States announced two weeks of ceasefire, they did an operation in the southern part of Isfahan. They wanted to exhaust each and every opportunity they had to do something against Iran. Right before this new phase of the conflict, of the war, in my opinion, Donald Trump announced two days ago—not last night, the night before—he said that we are doing something like Operation Freedom.

Let's go and open up the Strait of Hormuz. Not only Operation Freedom, but together with the sanctions they tried to impose on China, on Chinese refineries, they said that if they want to work with Iranians, they're going to be under sanctions—Chinese, American sanctions. Then what happened? What was the response from China? China said, you're going to sanction them? We're going to support them. You can work with Iran, and we're going to support you against the United States. This is the game. You know, they're trying to do their best to put pressure on Iran, but it doesn't seem that they're getting to the point of understanding that Iran is totally prepared, in my opinion, for a major war.

As we talked today, they're preparing for a major war with the United States, the third round of the war. And this is the problem. You don't see any sort of consistency in the Trump administration. That's why it's so difficult to deal with this sort of situation they're dealing with right now—the Iranians, I'm talking about. And I don't see this war coming to an end. I don't see Donald Trump being able to do something. You know, this one-page memorandum, a memo they're talking about—

what does it mean? This is just simply nothing. It could be the framework, as you mentioned, but who's going to negotiate on this framework? I don't see the capabilities in the Trump administration. I don't see anybody serious in negotiation. And that's the problem.

That's a huge sort of, you know, difficulty that not only Iran, but I would say Russia is experiencing with the Trump administration. And how do you see it, Pepe, when it comes to China? China seems to me that since the war in Ukraine started, they're getting closer to Russia and Iran. You remember during the first year of the war in Ukraine, many people were arguing that China would sell Russia for Taiwan and they were going to make some sort of deal with the United States on Taiwan. That didn't happen. And right now, maybe somehow some people are arguing the same thing—that Donald Trump is going to go to China, he's going to make a deal on Taiwan, and China would cooperate with the United States against Iran. What is your understanding of that?

#Pepe

Oh, no, absolutely not. There won't be any deals involving Taiwan or otherwise. Basically, once again, as we know, he has less than zero cards in his hand. For the Chinese, this is protocol. The first summit had to be postponed. If they could, they would postpone this one because there's nothing substantive to talk about. So, okay, it's there, it's in the protocol. Okay, we do it and we get rid of it, because they know there won't be any breakthrough. And, of course, on top of it, they cannot trust anything coming from Trump. And third, they know that the overall strategy—and this goes way beyond Trump, this is in the national security strategy—is the forever war against China, by all means necessary: encirclement, containment, harassment, you name it. And this is not going to change.

So, they're going to keep following everything that they deliberated for the five-year plan. In the technological race, they are at full speed ahead. In terms of sanctions, they don't care about sanctions anymore, which was the case with this response when the Americans were targeting their oil refineries. Basically, the Chinese said, under Chinese law, that's it. These companies have to follow Chinese law, and what you're doing is illegal. So, bye-bye. And from now on, this is going to be in other sectors of the economy. So the Chinese are not playing defense anymore. They are reacting immediately afterwards in an offensive manner. So that changes completely what the Americans had so far—these levers of pressure. It started last year, in April last year, when there was that volley of sanctions against the Chinese.

You could see that the Chinese response already a year ago was very different. They resisted from the start. And now they are not only resisting, but there are counterpunches, which is the case with the oil refineries. So that's it. What sort of leverage does Trump have to pressure China? Not much. And now, if he is serious about finding... We don't know if he's serious or not. He doesn't know what he wants with the whole Iranian horrible adventure. Who's paying the price for all that? The global economy. Especially very fragile nations, which are probably going to be facing famine in a few months, certainly in the second semester. So this means there's got to be some sort of resolution in

the next few weeks. Otherwise, the global economy—the spiral downwards of the global economy—is going to be even more horrible than what is being predicted at the moment.

And, of course, his domestic situation is catastrophic. It's the only thing he thinks about. He is condemned to be a lame-duck president. And anything can happen. When you become a lame-duck president, you're easy prey for everything. It could be anything—a destitution, impeachment, sending him to jail, whatever. Everything will be open. And not only him, but his cronies as well. Because this is a mafioso system with lots of grifters profiting from it, starting with his son-in-law, who is probably the grifter-in-chief. And guess what, Nima? He himself—Kushner himself—appointed the new negotiator of the Trump team. And guess what? The guy's an IDF, a Zionist asset. He's going to, in theory, be an advisor to Witkoff.

#Nima

It's a joke.

#Pepe

It's a joke. How can you possibly take these people seriously?

#Nima

Yeah.

#Pepe

And the Iranians said over and over again, we're not going to the same table with these two idiots. That's it. The only one that they would possibly talk to is Vance. And Vance, for the moment, is out of the picture. Maybe he'll come back later. But that's it. There's nobody to negotiate with. And, of course, theoretically, the United States has a Secretary of State, who, by the way, today was saying something astonishing. He said that basically we're trying to get the situation, including the Strait of Hormuz, back to where it was. He actually said that. This guy has an IQ of what? 10? 12? Maybe? He is confessing a strategic defeat in front of the whole planet and he still doesn't understand that.

Unbelievable. You provoked this whole thing. Go back to where it was. Obviously, if you hadn't done this war, spent zillions of dollars, destroyed a great deal of the Iranian infrastructure, now destroying the infrastructure of the global economy, none of that would have happened. So it's your fault. So it's going to be very hard, Nima. You're right. It's going to be practically impossible. Who are the Iranians negotiating with in the next round, if there is a next round? And on top of it, they're going to have this backup, this diplomatic backup of both Russia and China. The Russians are now deeply implicated in the whole thing.

And if Trump really wants to find an off-ramp for himself, he's going to have to listen to the Russians. And the Russians can force Trump to back off in many aspects. But that's it. Now, far from being alone, Iran is supported by two superpowers. That's a completely different ballgame. And the Trump administration is supported by virtually nobody. Even the vassals. Europe doesn't exist. Political suicide. And obviously, in the Persian Gulf, the only ones are the UAE. That's why the UAE question from now on is going to be the burning question in the Persian Gulf. We know that the GCC is already split. We know that Saudi Arabia is playing a very clever game. Saudi Arabia, theoretically, is part of trying to find a solution.

Today, they actually called the Saudi Arabian foreign minister. So they are talking. Do they talk to the UAE foreign minister? No, because they are at war against Iran. So the UAE is the burning question. The Arab-Israel in the UAE, if they don't get their act together, they can be smashed in the near future and destroyed easily. But that's very, very dangerous. Across the waters from the Persian Gulf, the Iranians look over there and say, we have to take care of these people. Very, very dangerous. And it's a mafia state as well. That's why they get along with Trump so well. That's why MBZ gets along with Trump so well. Because it's a mini-monarchy mafia setup.

#Nima

And the day, Pepe, I think the day that the United Arab Emirates decides to do something against Iran, that would be the end of the United Arab Emirates. And nobody would care about them. Nobody would.

#Pepe

Nobody, even the Arabs. The Arabs won't care about them, not to mention the rest of the Global South.

#Nima

Mm-hmm. Because we have Israeli forces in the United Arab Emirates. We have American forces. They're doing a lot in this country. And they don't understand they're living in a house of glass. And it's such a fragile situation they're in. They don't understand that.

#Pepe

They don't understand it. They definitely don't understand it. And they are arrogant, very unilateral, because, as you know, there's only one deciding individual — that's MBZ and nobody else. It's a one-man rule for all practical purposes. And, of course, the family around. It's a hardcore dictatorship, a monarchic dictatorship, based on slave labor on top of it, selling a fiction to the whole planet. And obviously, people gullible enough, they bought into the Dubai dream, which from the beginning was

an enormous fiction. The Dubai business model has already collapsed. So what they have left is Abu Dhabi and selling oil, which they were dreaming of selling — 5 million barrels a day — using especially Fujairah, right? But if there is a resumption of the war, which is still quite possible, let's say from 1 to 10, the possibility is probably around 9.

#Nima

Exactly.

#Pepe

You would say that, right? Around 9. There may be a resumption of the war. Perhaps not now, but eventually, yes. And if Iran establishes, like they established before in this past war, until this is fired at least, that the UAE is part of it — that's it. It's bye-bye, UAE.

#Nima

Pepe, the spokesman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said that what Axios reported in terms of the text being agreed between Iran and the United States is a wish list, not a reality. It's a wish list.

#Pepe

Yes, it is a wish list from the American point of view, certainly. From the Iranian point of view, everybody knows the main Iranian points. And also, most people know that the Americans will refute them. They will never accept them. So once again, probably there's only one person in the outer galaxies who could bridge the gap — Vladimir Putin. There's nobody else. It's not going to be Xi Jinping. The Chinese will never get their hands dirty with this thing. First of all, because they would refuse to discuss Iran with Trump. The Russians are different, because Putin has this, I would say, global transit apart from Europe. Putin can talk to anybody all over the planet, apart from the Europeans, and is influential. And, of course, Trump listens to him. He's one of the very few.

So apart from that, there's no possible solution for this gripping dementia. And it's a president on the way to dementia, surrounded by absolute idiots who not only don't understand Iran, they don't understand West Asia, they don't understand Eurasia, they don't understand the multipolar world, and they don't understand how fragile the super, super, superpower is. There's this classic imperial mix of arrogance and ignorance. And in their case now, when you look at the Secretariat of Forever Wars, it's a mix of nastiness and stupidity. And none of us could ever imagine that nastiness would be so stupid and stupidity would be so nasty. Just look at the Secretary of Forever Wars. He's the personal incarnation of this syndrome. So the war will be back, Nima. What is your take? After Trump, Xi Jinping?

#Nima

I would say many people in Iran are talking about it happening before Donald Trump goes there.

#Pepe

And their argument is that... this weekend, then.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. Because they're thinking that this weekend is the initiation of the war. I don't know if that will happen. Many people are somehow expecting it to happen.

#Pepe

There's no meeting next week. The Chinese are going to cancel it, obviously.

#Nima

Yeah. If they start it, that would be the cancellation somehow of the meeting. And I think today, as we talk, Araghchi is talking with China because nobody believes the Trump administration anymore. Today they say something, and then in two hours, in two minutes, they're going to change the whole game.

#Pepe

Because they have no strategy, Nima, as we all know. They improvise, and then they improvise on the previous improvisation, and then they even forget what they improvised. There's zero strategy in everything. The only thing that probably registers in Trump's mind is that he needs an off-ramp. He's in the middle of a monster jam, and he cannot find a way out.

#Nima

He desperately needs that, but we know that Iran is not going to give it to him. Iran has no interest in helping Donald Trump.

#Pepe

On the contrary.

#Nima

Exactly. They don't want to help him. This is the problem. And here is what came out, Pepe. Caitlin Doornbos, a New York Post reporter, she reported that she had a... She says that, I have now confirmed this myself through a Pakistani source familiar with the mediation efforts. My source said that... My source said there are multiple versions of the document, the document that Axios was talking about.

#Pepe

There are multiple versions, then.

#Nima

Yeah, and that the details are still being worked out on which variant will be acceptable to both the United States and Iran. It seems that there is no agreement, you know, on this document. That's what I think. It's so amazing — before agreeing on anything, Donald Trump is announcing it. Go ahead.

#Pepe

So there are different MOUs. And, of course, there's a back and forth. There's no question about that. To get to the final MOU itself is going to be immense, assuming we get there. Because the positions are completely apart in every sense, including the order of the procedure, the procedural order, and the key focus — the sequential key focus. For instance, it's going to be very hard to convince Trump that the first thing to be discussed is the end of the war and other wars. First of all, because he cannot commit to that. And he will not commit to that. And even if he does, he can tear it up, like he did with the JCPOA. Once again, there's no trust.

And even if you have, for instance, the Pakistanis, they are not strong enough mediators to impose anything. The Omanis — same thing. The only ones who will be able to impose something and impose some order in the discussions will be the Russians. Do the Russians want to do this? No. They have their own fish to fry, including the possibility of those lunatic terrorists interfering with the May 9 parade on Saturday. And this is a serious threat. But at least the Minister of Defense already said, if you do this, okay, we level Kiev. Pay attention. We level Kiev. I'm not sure those people in Kiev have registered that yet.

And the Russians are losing their patience. And, of course, inside Russia, it's something that... I'm dying to get the inside view when I get there later this month. People are losing their patience with the whole thing as well. Especially now that you have infrastructure being attacked nearly every day — the oil installations, oil refineries, and all that. People are starting to get really, really pissed in

Russia. So there is pressure now a little bit everywhere. Okay, let's solve this problem once and for all. So this is Russia's priority. They don't need to become moderators in somebody else's war. They have their own war to solve first, right?

#Nima

Happy, I'm not that familiar with the mindset of the Chinese government, but if I were to mention one single point of these two conflicts — in Ukraine and in the Middle East — for the Chinese position, it would be: if the empire attacks you, you don't back down, you fight back.

#Pepe

Exactly.

#Nima

And does that mean that China would not give some sort of, you know, I would say some sort of off-ramp to the United States, or help the United States in the case of Iran and Russia? Or instead of, you know, cooperating with the United States, fighting back in the case of Taiwan? Because it doesn't mean it's all about Taiwan. It's about how they can put pressure on China in the Strait of Malacca.

#Pepe

Exactly. It's Malacca. You're right. This was the theme of one of my columns last week. And Malacca is inevitable, sooner or later. Hormuz was a test. They lost. So they're going to get even angrier and now driven to, okay, we couldn't do it in Hormuz, but we're going to do it in Malacca. And that's why that military cooperation agreement signed between Jakarta and Washington is so dangerous. This might be the first, you know, the first plank of the strategy. We get that, and then we force the Indonesians to have overflight rights for American military planes. Then we try to set up a base somewhere. There you go. It's inevitable. So the Indonesians already made a big mistake.

And so far, I have not seen... There's a lot of criticism in Indonesia about it, including from their own Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the way. But don't forget, the head of the government is a military man, very close to Suharto in the past. When Suharto was deposed, he wanted to run for president, thinking that he would be elected. He was not. He was biding his time all the time. And now that he is president, don't forget, you know, these are old military reflexes. And they were very, very close with the Americans all the time. So Prabowo, you know, this veneer that he has of a progressive guy and all that, that's not the real story. It's dangerous. It's very dangerous. So Malacca is inevitable, Nima. Inevitable. But the thing is, now they are very, very angry because they lost Hormuz.

And Hormuz was the preamble to get to Malacca. Now they're going to have to start from scratch. But it's the same thing because the war is fundamentally against China. The Chinese, everybody in China knows that, even people who don't follow politics. So the position of the Chinese government is very complex in the sense that they, of course, want the Strait of Hormuz to be fully open. Because after all, everything that they need goes through Hormuz. This is one of the things that Wang Yi told Araghchi today. But at the same time, he was talking about the sovereignty and the rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This means the Chinese understand if there is a toll booth and it would involve many of their own tankers, or they have an arrangement, their tankers go for free. So they're not as touched as other nations.

For instance, the Japanese and the South Koreans, they're going to have to pay the toll. The Chinese, not necessarily. Of course, this depends — this interferes with the other Chinese suppliers because China buys oil from everybody in the Gulf. So the Chinese would want these tankers to go through as well. And then it starts to become complicated because they have to tell the Iranians, look, maybe we can find an arrangement for all of our tankers coming from the Persian Gulf. But they understand perfectly the question of sovereignty, independence, and the fact that the Iranians are establishing a new management system in the Strait of Hormuz. The Chinese understand that very, very well. After all, the war is against them. And they understood the American blockade. The American blockade was also against them. And it's still there.

But the Chinese are masters at navigating all that silently. But the fact that they are coming out openly and saying that everything directly linked to this war is illegitimate — this means completely illegal — that's enormous. This means that anything the Americans are doing is illegal, or will do later, is illegal because the original premise was and is illegal. So it would be fantastic. Obviously, we won't have this scene. Can you imagine, Nima, Xi Jinping telling this to Trump in his face, face to face? Obviously, Xi Jinping is going to say that with him, sipping a little bit of tea, a smirk here, almost a smile, probably using a metaphor from the Tang Dynasty. But I'm sure he's going to say it. And obviously, Trump won't know how to answer something like this, especially because the whole thing is his fault.

#Nima

Yeah, let's see what would happen, Pepe. I think we are heading toward a storm, in my opinion. Let's see what would happen.

#Pepe

Oh yes, this is going to be quite something.

#Nima

Thank you. Thank you so much for being with us today.

#Pepe

Great pleasure. Great pleasure. Goodbye from the islands back here. Ah, yes. Today the rain came early.

#Nima

Are you having fun there?

#Pepe

Uma maravilha. Obrigado. Thanks to all of you all over the world. And don't forget, the struggle continues, and...

#Nima

The struggle continues.

#Pepe

A luta continua. And don't let your guard down, because it's all of us against the usual suspects. It's a fight to the finish.

#Nima

Exactly.

#Pepe

Thank you.

#Nima

Ciao, ciao.

#Pepe

Obrigado. Ciao.