

Col. Larry Wilkerson: Iran WIPES OUT Trump's Proposal & INSISTS on Its Own Terms

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Tuesday, May 12th, 2026, and our dear friend, Col. Larry Wilkerson, is here with us. Welcome back, sir.

#Larry

Good to be with you, Nima, as usual.

#Nima

Let me start, Larry, with Donald Trump. He has departed to China. He's going to be there on Wednesday, which is tomorrow. He's going to be there and he's going to meet with Xi Jinping, and then he's going to leave China on Friday. But before getting there, to what would happen in this meeting with Xi Jinping, he was waiting for the Iranian response to that American proposal for four days, which was—the Iranian response was somehow, you know, it wasn't expected. I don't know what he expected from the Iranian side, but he was disappointed by the Iranian response.

What was in that response? Basically, from what we've learned from Fars News, an official news agency in Iran connected to the IRGC, it says that the five points are preconditions to start negotiations with the United States. Basically, the United States is talking about the nuclear program. Donald Trump is talking about the nuclear program. Before leaving the United States, he said it's all about Iran not getting a nuclear weapon. Here are the preconditions—five points: ending the war on all fronts.

Compensating war damages, releasing frozen assets, lifting all sanctions, recognition of Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. And that's why Donald Trump said it's unacceptable, and he called it a piece of garbage they sent us. I didn't even, you know, have time. And what was the point, in your opinion? It seems to me, Larry, that Iran understands that time is not on Donald

Trump's side, it's on their side. That's why they didn't respond so quickly, because basically they're talking about the 10-point and 14-point plans they had before, and they didn't change anything in this new response to Donald Trump. What do you make of it?

#Larry

I think that's the fundamental statement of what Iran would take to negotiate further, if you will, or to come to any kind of genuine ceasefire and achieve some sort of end to this war. They're giving the essence of what they will accept. And all those things are probably, you know—there's no, you didn't even mention the nuclear program. It's not there.

#Nima

They're not negotiating the nuclear program.

#Larry

That's the most glaring thing, looking at it. I lost my bet on his trip to China because I didn't think he'd go. I said 50-50, but I was putting my weight on the 50-no-go side. I think that's going to be a real bad experience for him. Whether it's Wang Yi delivering it, or whether it's Xi Jinping, or the two together, or whatever, it's going to be a very bad experience for him. And if he's going to try to get Xi Jinping to help him with whatever it is with regard to his idea of how to end the conflict, I think he's going to be sadly disappointed. So I don't know how to judge him. The coincidence of all of this coming together at this particular moment—it may just be serendipity.

But I think we're looking at, again, as I've said before, we're looking at probably Netanyahu's plan, which is to resume this war and to go back full scale against Iran with everything that America has marshaled in the region. Most of it being air power that is not even necessary from the ships in the region—it's going to be air power coming in from all around. And it's going to be everything America has, with everything that America has too, in the way of ordnance to drop on Iran. And that's going to be 11 or 12 days maybe of bombing, and then we're going to say, "Okay, you see what our answer is. Are you ready to negotiate now?" And they're going to say no. And where are we going to be then? I mean, I'm not totally convinced that Iran would be able to withstand that kind of assault and still say no.

They might find it very difficult to even say anything at that point because it's going to be so devastating. But I don't think it's going to break their back or break their will. So we're back at the same thing with a whole lot more innocent people killed and a whole lot more ordnance spent. And ordnance, very frankly, that probably we need for other things. So... it's not a good situation, not a good situation for either side.

#Nima

Yeah. Larry, looking at the points that Iran just mentioned, I think they're not seeking a treaty or some sort of, you know, temporary agreement between Iran and the United States, like what we had with the JCPOA, in my opinion. The fragility of the JCPOA was that it wasn't ratified by Congress. That's why the president of the United States could withdraw from the JCPOA without having that sort of repercussion.

#Larry

Just think about that comment, though, that you just made. Think about that comment for a moment. How on earth could anybody in any negotiation with any president in the future think that anything that president said or did or swore to or promised was worth a damn? I mean, what you just said is true, but it wasn't true of past presidents. It wasn't true of the general track record of American presidents. It wasn't true of the general track record of American Congresses either, particularly the Senate. It was not that difficult to get a treaty that was in the interests of the country—national security interests, economic interests, or whatever—ratified by a two-thirds vote in the Senate. I mean, look at the treaties that we ratified.

And those treaties have the force of domestic law by our Constitution. So what are we saying about the empire when we say that you cannot make an agreement with the empire's leadership and expect it to stay? We're saying that it's going to change with every four-year period or eight-year period or whatever, or even more frequently. So how do you go about conducting business in the world if that is known by the rest of the world about your trustworthiness? Trust is probably the most important ingredient of diplomacy, ultimately. And diplomacy is the relations of nations. That said, that's what diplomacy is. So how can you have relations with other nations when you are utterly untrustworthy? They don't care if it's four-year intervals.

They just care about whether or not you keep your word. And we don't keep our word. So we are crucifying ourselves in a world that is going to have an alternative summit in India in September, whose purpose is comity, cooperation, sustainability, innovation, and resilience, and things like that. That's what BRICS is saying to the world, while we're saying to the world, you want to know our policy? Our policy is military, sanctions, and untrustworthiness. Who is the world going to listen to? I have no question answering that. The world's going to listen to the other people. We're crucifying ourselves, is what we're doing. And this war is just prima facie, in-your-face, stark evidence of what we're doing to ourselves.

#Nima

I see, Larry, the way Iran is talking about negotiations, I see they don't want to negotiate with Donald Trump. They want to negotiate with the United States. They want the United States to be responsible for the agreement.

#Larry

Yeah, well, that's the way anybody making an agreement like this should feel. I mean, you don't want to think you're making the agreement with Vladimir Putin. You want to think you're making the agreement with the Russian people. Even if you're in the Soviet Union, you know, when it was, people said it was run by one man or by a Politburo. That was all hogwash. No nation's run by one man. Not for very long, anyway. Ask Adolf Hitler.

#Nima

Yeah, and the reason I'm saying this is because lifting sanctions on Iran is not in the hands of the President of the United States. He can somehow alleviate or reduce the effect of sanctions, but he cannot lift the sanctions. It's up to Congress.

#Larry

Exactly.

#Nima

And that's the way that Iran started this negotiation. If there is no will in the establishment, they're basically talking with the establishment in the United States. They're not talking with Donald Trump.

#Larry

They know us better than we know them. That's what we're saying. Now, there are some people in this country that know Iran fairly well, but no one in the administration. I don't think there's a single solitary person in Trump's administration that knows Iran more than a quarter inch deep, if that. But they know us. They know us inside and out.

#Nima

Larry, what do you make of this new aircraft carrier or the new submarine in the region that is capable of shooting nuclear missiles? And what is that? Why does the United States need to announce that? Because they can keep it far away and still hit the target. They don't need to announce it. And is that part of the sort of pressure?

#Larry

Well, I wanted to say two could play at that game, but it's more than two that could play at that game. At a minimum, it's three — Russia, China, and the United States. And Russia and China together equal our submarine fleet and even surpass it in some ways because China has very quiet diesel boats. And those diesel boats are just prime for the North Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman. That's a very special body of water in terms of submarine operations — the convergence zones, the

salinity, the temperatures, and everything. We would talk about it at the Naval War College, where you would have a Russian attack sub and a U.S. boomer ballistic missile sub, and they'd be lying beside each other, and the one would not even know the other one was there.

Because passive and active sonar and other capabilities for surveilling your whereabouts, as it were, don't work well in that water. It's fabulous water to hide in if you're a submarine. So what are we saying? Are we saying that we're going to shoot a nuclear weapon, possibly? Are we saying that we're going to shoot a Trident off a ballistic missile submarine? What kind of threat is this? I mean, it makes no sense whatsoever because everyone knows we're not going to do it. Or do they? Is this Trump again trying to seem like an insane man to increase his leverage with Iran? Don't think it's going to work, no. Don't think it's going to work. Your standard operating procedure doesn't work here.

#Nima

Netanyahu is suggesting in his latest interview, he was mentioning that the war in Iran is not going to end anytime soon. We are months away from the end of the war against Iran. What does that mean, Larry? The war started, Donald Trump said to us that it's going to take four days, then a few weeks, and now Benjamin Netanyahu is talking about months ahead. Donald Trump himself said we are not over with the war against Iran, 70%. And who's running the show? Is it Benjamin Netanyahu?

#Larry

It feels that Benjamin Netanyahu has started out running the show, I think, and very much so. But let's examine a few things that Benjamin Netanyahu has said, and let's examine his situation. One, he has started talking about, and I wasn't stunned to see this—I was maybe a little surprised to see it so early—but he is already talking about divorcing himself from the United States. He's talking about maybe cutting off the money because they don't need it anymore. And he's also hinting that he has other places to go and other people to talk to who might be more cooperative with him than the United States. I'd love to know who that is. He's also talking about winning this election coming up, and his party is splintering even as he talks about it.

Read Haaretz's online edition for today, and you'll see that they have real problems right now. They may even have what is the equivalent of a vote of no confidence in this government. It's a little bit different than the British Parliament in the way they do it, but it takes four Knesset votes in a row, I think—bang, bang, bang—all doing the same thing. But they're having certain party leaders right now saying that's what they want. And this grew out of the business of whether or not the ultra-Orthodox are going to serve in the IDF or not. But I think there's a lot of fatigue with Bibi Netanyahu, too. So he's got that problem. And then he's got the problem that he is, as you just intimated, at the center of all this.

He's being beaten badly in Lebanon right now, and he's dealing with that by moving ever further north of the Litani River and by taking on Lebanese civilians in their homes and everything else in order to prosecute this conflict. And he's killing a lot of people that aren't Hezbollah by any stretch of the imagination. So he's in this trap that he's created for himself, political and military. And the only thing he knows to do is keep going. And he is doing that, and he's doing it successfully to this point. But I'm not sure that either politically or militarily it's going to continue. Is he going to recognize that? And what is he going to do in either category if it happens? I don't know.

I can't read his mind that way. But I do know he's in trouble. And I do know Israel's forces are in trouble. And there are so many indicators of that right now that you would think there would be some people in the Israeli military leadership really speaking out. You've got some that are speaking, but they're not really being pointed enough about what the problems are—whether it's the KIA rate, the WIA rate, the PTSD rate, the suicide rate, or whatever. They're all very bad right now. Also, the no-show rate is not very good, especially in this last complement of reservists.

So Israel's got real problems right now. And if they don't do something to keep Iran from executing its next list of targets, as it were, then Israel is going to disappear. I mean, they're going to be very heavily hit in this next round. There's going to be no holding back if they go. They're going to go after the region. They're going to go after facilities like Ras Tanura. They're going to go after all manner of things that are going to increase the potential for, by September, having a global depression—certainly having a global recession by June.

And they're going to put the world economy in real dire straits in terms of what can be done and what can't be done about it. So that's probably going to be a lot of the conversation that Trump has with Xi Jinping. It's about the only leverage he'll be able to bring—that if we go on with this, we're going to be in real trouble. All of us are going to be in real trouble. The world economy is going to be in trouble. Xi Jinping might be willing to listen to that and might have some of his own views about it as to who's responsible. But it's really becoming a self-built closing trap for Bibi right now—in a military sense, in a political sense, in a personal sense. It's becoming a trap. How he's going to extricate himself from this, I don't know. But I don't think—he's gotten out of so many messes in the past, the last 25 years, he's gotten out of so many messes—but I don't think he's going to escape this one. And frankly, I don't think Israel is going to escape it either.

So we're going to have some real changes in the whole picture there. What is Donald Trump going to do when that happens? Is he going to break away? Is he going to find the relief he needs to execute a quick deal with Iran and pull us out of the entire thing? I don't know, but that would be an opportunity probably if it were to happen. Because Netanyahu is, I believe, the single most important thing keeping Donald Trump in this conflict. So you can't divorce the two. You've got to talk about Bibi when you're talking about Donald and vice versa. And both are troubled people right now in many respects, troubled people. Then you've got to think about what the Republican Party is

going to do domestically and where it's headed other than to some kind of insurrection and some kind of takeover of the government that perpetuates its rule and perpetuates it beyond Trump. That's, in some respects, being prepared for in this country too. Think of it this way.

Think about when Caesar crossed the Rubicon. Caesar was not an imperial entity at that moment. There are some historians even that think that Caesar was a more liberal leader than history has given him credit for, that he was a leader of the people. Caesar's coming back. For whatever reason, the assassination was carried out. It was carried out on the Senate floor. He was given adequate warning more than once about it happening. He chose to go into the Senate. He was killed. What happened when he was killed? Immediately, almost in Roman time, a civil war broke out, and that civil war pitched a number of parties against others. Octavius was the victor.

I think if you'd been looking at it from a military point of view at the time Caesar was assassinated and putting together the pieces, you would have said that's probably what's going to happen. There's going to be a civil war and the dude is going to win. Octavius, later Augustus, wins. Beats Mark Antony, beats Cleopatra, beats the combined forces, beats them all and wins. What does he do? Well, people forget that that was a republic war before Caesar crossed the Rubicon and was assassinated. In the civil wars, Octavian wins and becomes Augustus, and the empire is established. It would happen a lot faster today in America. And it would happen because the Republican Party would want it to happen.

The leaders of the Republican Party would want it to happen. So we would be thrust into an imperial situation that isn't just me accusing us of being an empire. We would, in fact, be an empire. And one of these people—Elon Musk, Peter Thiel—who's going to be the technocrat that puts together the technocracy that results and rules this empire ad infinitum? I mean, that's what I think they're thinking about. And we're looking at that situation being exacerbated and accelerated by this war with Iran. And I can't put it any more directly than the peril we're in. The Republic is going to disappear, just like the Republic disappeared when Rome went into its civil wars and came out an empire.

#Nima

Larry, the other point—Benjamin Netanyahu, in his interview with 60 Minutes, mentioned that he was asked about how you can get the enriched uranium in Iran. What is your attitude or your solution for that? He said, you have to go in and get it. So he was asked, how can you do that? Just go in and get it. But he didn't mention that. But in my opinion, what he was trying to say is that the United States needs to put ground forces in. Of course. Because then, when you're going to have that sort of confrontation, who's going to get killed? Americans and Iranians. Where are Israelis in that equation?

#Larry

No, it's a good question. Good question. Let me bring something else up that we talked about extensively with INR and other people—the intelligence operation at State—which is the best intelligence group within the 18 in the American intelligence community.

#Nima

We talked about this quite extensively.

#Larry

How do you kill brains? And this was with regard to Saddam Hussein and his possession of nuclear weapons. If you have a single person left in that country that has it in his head how to build a nuclear weapon and has access to software, has access to just a simple system, then you're never going to eradicate the desire for a nuclear weapon. Even more so, you're not going to eradicate the desire to build one. So if you're going in for a nuclear weapon program, you've got to kill all the scientists. You've got to take their brains. You've got to take the pamphlets that have been written. You've got to take the data that's been compiled, the computer disks, the computer, everything. You've got to take everything. And you still don't know that there isn't something lurking in a cave somewhere.

And that when you leave and things quiet down, they're going to go right back to it. So how do you eradicate, how do you stop proliferation of nuclear weapons? And we came to the conclusion that there were several ways you did it. And we used one of them with Gaddafi, for example. You had to convince the party that owning a nuclear weapon was more dangerous for them than not owning one. And the way you did that was fool them. I mean, that's kind of the way Condi Rice put it. You kind of fool them. There are other ways to do it too. We convinced South Africa and your country, I think, primarily because we demonstrated the cost and we demonstrated what it would mean for the budget and the economy of that particular country.

This is an extremely expensive endeavor you're thinking about embarking on. You need to think about it. And we will have some experts come in and tell you just how expensive it is. And when they see the price tag, they're shocked. And when they understand what that means for their budget and their political chances for being reelected and things like that, then they have an incentive to correspond with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, if you will, and not build a nuclear weapon. If you tell them that it's all about security and you have that problem to deal with, then it turns out to be like the DPRK. They go ahead and build a nuclear weapon. And right now they would probably say, no, didn't we tell you? You're not bothering us. You're not troubling us anymore.

We've got a nuclear weapon. We solved our problem. Where is Iran in that equation? Where do you think Iran would be influenceable in that equation? I'd say, given where they are and who they're up against—not just the United States, but primarily Israel with nuclear weapons already—you're not going to talk them out of it. You're not going to talk them out of it to the point where there isn't

someone left with some residual information who is going to go back on that track and build a nuclear weapon. So you're going to stay there forever? You're going to put the Shah back? Remember, the Shah wanted nuclear weapons. Remember, we wanted to give the Shah nuclear weapons.

All this to say that this is an intractable problem, and it's not a problem that's solved by military means, period. No matter what you do, how long you do it, how many people you kill, it's not solvable by military means. It has to be a civilian leadership. Maybe it's got an IRGC behind it. Maybe it's got military in its realm of decision-making. But it has to be people who understand the advantage and the disadvantage. And more than anything else, they have to understand the threat to them. And as long as you present that threat, the disadvantages are going to be outweighed by the advantage of being able to handle that threat.

I know this is all kind of, you know, ethereal, but you have to think about these things when you're trying to disincentivize someone from building a nuclear program. And Nima, right now, we are not disincentivizing Iran. We are totally incentivizing them. So, Bibi, march right in there and pick that uranium up. And by the way, I hope it, you know, affects you and kills you. Just march right in there and pick it up. You're not going to solve the problem. You're not going to solve the problem, no more than we solved the problem with Iraq. Remember when Israel attacked the reactor and destroyed the reactor? And then we found out when we went back in for the first time, we found out that Iraq was very close to building a nuclear weapon.

#Nima

We had, you know, the spokesperson of the Iranian Foreign Ministry say that if Israel makes a mistake and gives us a pretext, Iran's armed forces will make the best possible use of it. Basically, it seems to me, Larry, that the Iranian doctrine of responding to the way they would confront Israel is getting to be a preemptive sort of attack on their part if they feel Israel is doing something.

#Larry

I would think they would want to hit everything they know about and can locate with regard to Israel's nuclear weapons. Take them out. I'm not an expert on secondary detonations in that case, but I don't think there's a problem with hitting nuclear weapons the way there would be with some of their more powerful missiles and everything exploding themselves. I don't think that happens. Now, I may be wrong, but I don't think it happens. So if they were able to identify where they are, the majority of them, and take them out, they would probably do that.

Just as Israel would probably do the same thing to them, were they possessed of good enough intelligence to know exactly where, particularly where the places are that are building toward a nuclear weapon, which I'm convinced that Ted Postol is right about, that they probably do have something like that. And it's probably well hidden and a good secret—well-hidden secret as well as

location. You're playing with real danger here when you start talking about doing these sorts of things. And I go back to the Iranian foreign minister's term, I think it was him, who said the real problem in the region is Israel. If Israel were not a problem, they would get rid of their nuclear weapons.

They would sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they would become an Additional Protocol signer, and they would get rid of their nuclear weapons. But they're not going to do that. They are the problem in the region. From the top of the spectrum, the military spectrum, to the bottom, they're the problem. They're the problem at the top because they have nuclear weapons and no one else does. And they're the problem at the bottom because they have a vicious military that rapes, pillages, and plunders, and, you know, so there's no place in the middle that I would say was any good either. They have become a pariah state. They have become a pariah military. They've become despicable.

#Nima

The difficulties that Israel is facing, Larry, with Lebanon—you've mentioned the case of Lebanon. We know from the footage that came out from the region, it shows that they're capable, Lebanon is capable, Hezbollah is capable of hitting Iron Dome batteries, not just one of them. At least I've seen two of them being hit by FPV drones. These are huge losses if we consider all of the losses since the war between Iran and the United States started. It's just that the THAAD system is literally not that capable because of the interceptors. Four of them were destroyed during the war, and they used the THAAD system in South Korea. They brought that one to Israel or to Jordan, somewhere close to Israel.

#Larry

Which is a wonderful signal to our Republic of Korea allies. Oh, the North Korean threat has not disappeared? No, it hasn't. Well, we're going to take these anyway. You don't really think much of us, do you? Well, really, we don't. We're sending it to Israel. What kind of signal are you sending to Seoul?

#Nima

So considering the THAAD system together with the Patriot system, the PAC-3 system, they're basically running out of interceptors. And then comes the reality of the Iron Dome. Israelis are talking about the Iron Dome being 99% effective in hitting targets, but they're not capable of hitting these FPV drones because they're hitting the air defense system.

#Larry

Here's something I started thinking about with a couple of other military types the other day. You know, one of the things that comes out of Clausewitz and comes out of my head too, because I saw

it—war has its own dynamic, and its own dynamic can sometimes creep up on you and surprise you. And in this case, what if we get to the point where Iran is doing so much damage to Israel and ultimately so much damage to the United States that it whets its appetite for more? And we don't get a cessation of hostilities, even at the point of, as Haaretz said, all Iran has to do is not lose, right? But suppose Iran goes beyond just not losing and begins to win. What does that do to their minds? What does that do to the conflict in Clausewitzian terms?

Well, I can tell you, if I were Iran, I would press the advantage. I would destroy Israel. And I would do it on behalf of Lebanon. And I would do it on behalf of myself. And I would do it on behalf of what the Omani foreign minister said—the real problem in the region is Israel. And then once I had accomplished that purpose, I would have to, you know, pretty much consider that the United States is going to be incapable of stopping me from accomplishing it. And I'm not so sure that that's a bad judgment now. Then I would make overtures to the other Gulf states for peace and for silence and no more war. We got the United States on the run. We got Israel gone. Things are looking up in the region. I don't think they would be met with enmity. They'd be met with congratulations.

#Nima

Larry, there were two reports. One of them, in the Wall Street Journal, reported that the UAE was secretly attacking Iran. And the other point... lost their pipeline too, didn't they? Yeah. I wouldn't be surprised if the UAE would do something like that because the Iranians were hitting the UAE the way... you remember, since the war started, they were hitting the UAE more than other countries. But when it comes to Reuters reporting that Saudi Arabia carried out a series of unpublicized retaliatory strikes on Iran, I think they're just making BS, because since the war started, they've tried to demonize Saudi Arabia in a way that—I don't know what is happening, what is the main agenda behind that. Because the assessment, in my opinion, on the part of Iranian intelligence, is not this, is not this. They know what's going on in each and every one of these countries. They have intelligence coming out of these countries. The assessment doesn't show that Saudi Arabia was doing this.

#Larry

Well, I wouldn't trust the Wall Street Journal to tell me the truth on any matter, not even the economy anymore. I mean, they have—as the New York Times and the Washington Post do also—but the Wall Street Journal in particular has an agenda that is different from anyone else's agenda in Washington, as far as I'm concerned. They have people who are very much on the side of Kagan, for example, and others who want to, you know, just keep going against Russia until Russia disappears. They're on the side of people who want to keep going against Iran until Iran disappears. It's a group of people who don't have any problem fabricating things, especially if those things are along the lines of their propaganda line.

We accuse Fox News and others like Fox News of being the villains in the stories, you know. The New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal are just as much villains as Fox News, just sometimes on different matters. Sometimes on the same matter, but they don't want to admit it. We don't have a—we really do not have a free press in this country anymore. It's owned. It's owned by the people that usually own the press. Back in the days of Citizen Kane, William Randolph Hearst, and you know, you want a war? Tell me where you want it and I'll get it for you.

#Nima

To me, it feels that they see the reality of what has happened so far with the American bases. They feel, maybe mostly Israelis are feeling, that the reality of American bases being destroyed in these countries, not being able to defend these countries, and being used to defend Israel. So they feel that maybe Saudi Arabia is somehow moving or trying to negotiate to talk with Iranians. They have to demonize them. And they were all in before this war started. They were behind the scenes advocating for the continuation of this war, because this sort of allegation against Saudi Arabia is just amazing to me—the way that they're basically talking about Saudi Arabia behind the scenes, because we haven't heard anything from the Saudi officials so far.

And basically, as you've mentioned, the Wall Street Journal, you know, these sorts of news outlets are talking about the Saudi agenda behind the scenes. And there is some sort of agenda behind it. I think they see what is happening with the case of Qatar, with the case of Saudi Arabia. Because these two countries are not like—I would say the three countries, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. Looking at the phone calls between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the Qataris and the Omanis, you see they have, since the war started, more than six times they called, they talked to each other. But on the other hand, you don't see any sort of phone call between Iran and Bahrain, Iran and Kuwait, or Iran and the UAE. Just, if I'm not mistaken, just a single call between Iran and the UAE. So you see that division in the GCC countries.

#Larry

Well, it could be, and I'm not saying it is, but it could be a very carefully orchestrated campaign by Tehran to divide and conquer. And they could be using the...

#Nima

But the campaign, Larry, is not coming from Iran. The problem is that they're telling us, these outlets are telling us that Saudi Arabia, behind the scenes, is totally, you know, in favor of the war, in favor of the continuation of the war because they want to reshape or somehow show to the Iranians that Saudi Arabia is totally in with this war. I don't know what would be your take on that, because we haven't heard anything from the Iranians.

#Larry

No, I don't know who's playing who here for what purposes, other than those that can be gleaned superficially. I don't think, first of all, I don't think there's any unity whatsoever among the GCC countries. I think the GCC is dead, completely dead, just like NATO is completely dead. So we've got to have some behind-the-scenes moving in order to try and figure out what they're going to replace it with. What's it going to look like? If they're forward-thinking at all—now, they might not be. They might be just doing nothing but thinking about the present conflict, and it's consumed all of their energy and their brainpower.

And all of them are acting individually as to how we come out of this and how we come out of it the best. Over it all is the decision that they've got to make about whether or not they continue to put their eggs in the basket of the United States. And I think that is overall giving them real problems, real heartburn, because they can't make up their minds whether or not the United States has become so undependable and will in the future be so undependable that they need to find, as Netanyahu is saying he's doing, new sugar daddies or new people to deal with in terms of their armaments and so forth.

Breaking Saudi Arabia away from the United States—I was looking at an assessment of it the other day done by a friend of mine. It's pretty difficult because we are so embedded in everything from logistics to maintenance. But it could be done, of course, and it would be done, and it would be done precipitously, probably, if they decided to do it—and it would be goodbye. But who do they go to then? Do they go to China? Do they go to Russia? Do they go to Russia and China? Do they bring Pakistan and India into it? How do they mold their future if they are saying goodbye?

#Nima

Or if America is saying goodbye to them ultimately.

#Larry

I don't know how this is going to play out, and this individual I was talking to was not trying to tell me what was probably going to happen in the region. He was just telling me what was difficult about it, what was complex about it, especially for us. And I think he was right. And look at who we've got leading us right now. I mean, I'm not just talking about Trump. I'm talking about Hegseth and Cain, too. I think Cain has proven to me that he's about as competent as a wet noodle. He's a typical Air Force officer, thinks bombs solve everything. And, you know, the thing that really turned me off was the comments about the suicide dolphins.

I mean, what a flip comment to be making in such a serious time. And so, who's leading us right now? And who's making the plans? And who's making the future plans? And how are they making a set of alternative plans if this happens, if that happens, or if this happens? I don't see anybody doing

that. Who's planning for the future of the U.S. presence in the Gulf? I don't see anybody doing that. I don't see anybody thinking about that in a strategic sort of way. First, are we going to be out? Is it going to be all the way out, or are we going to be just back to an offshore balancing strategy like we did for so long?

Are we just going to take our troops off the ground, and are we going to be able to convince those people in the region, like the Saudis primarily, but others too, that we're still dependable in terms of what we haven't been dependable for with respect to Iran? And how's Iran going to play in this? How are they going to reach in and exacerbate our decision-making and Riyadh's decision-making? We haven't thought about these things, Nima. We haven't thought about them at all. We just thought we were going to bash Iran and it would be over in a short period of time and Bibi would be satisfied and we would go from there. None of that is going to happen. None of it. So we have no plans. We have no strategy. We have no place to go.

#Nima

What, in your opinion, would Trump ask Xi Jinping to do as a favor when it comes to bringing pressure?

#Larry

What would that be? I think it would be a direct ask to bring pressure on Tehran to essentially accept whatever Trump will say he would accept to Xi Jinping. Now, I don't know if he reveals all of his marbles, you know, but I think it's going to be, will you help me bring— and I don't know how Trump asks this question, because this is not something Trump does. But you've got to understand, things are going to be bad for the whole globe if the Strait stays the way it is, in consternation, and therefore we need to bring this to a close. But we can't accept them being a nuclear power, so I'll accept that being the only component of the deal, such as it might be, that is essential to me. We can put some candy on the rest of it, but that's the only thing that's essential to me. And then I'll leave them alone, and that'll be the key for Xi Jinping. Is Xi Jinping going to help him?

Is Xi Jinping going to say, I'll bring pressure on Tehran? I don't think so. I really don't think so. I think Trump is going to leave Beijing a lot sadder than he arrived. But I think that's what he's going to be after—help with the nuclear deal. Ultimately, that's what he'll accept, and he'll sugarcoat the rest of it, and reparations and the rest of the stuff. No, I'm not going to do any of that stuff because I'm stopping the war and I'm getting out of here. Do you deal with Bibi now? How does Bibi deal with that? Bibi's the real fly in the ointment here, in my view. He's the real fly in the ointment. How do you get around Bibi? And if the Israelis were to get rid of him, would it be any better?

#Nima

Don't see that coming. No. The only thing that can force, you know, somehow maybe change Israeli policies or public opinion in Israel is reality.

#Larry

Yes. Yes. But you've got—I don't know how you get the reality into the majority of Israeli Jews when they're underground. And who knows that? That's the reason he won't let them come out.

#Nima

Larry, let's assume Donald Trump comes out of China, as you've mentioned, without any sort of help from China when it comes to the Middle East.

#Larry

Let's suppose he gets a lecture. Well, let's suppose the lecture is from Xi Jinping to Donald Trump.

#Nima

The same as he received from Putin.

#Larry

Yeah. Yeah. And it starts out something like this: What the hell did you mean by starting this stupid war? And it goes downhill from there for Trump. It goes uphill for Xi Jinping. I mean, he's telling the guy what he thinks of the guy's strategy.

#Nima

Yeah. But in my opinion, if I put myself in Xi's shoes, I would say, why would I help this guy when he tried to hurt us? Before going to China, he imposed some sanctions on the Chinese.

#Larry

The chickens are coming home to roost.

#Nima

Imposing sanctions in the case of tariffs. All the history behind you, and you try to ask a favor from Xi, and this guy is not going to be stupid enough to give you any sort of leverage, because that's going to end up against him, not against Iran or Russia.

#Larry

The only place where there might be some leverage, and I'm not sure Donald Trump's smart enough to take advantage of it, or his counselors, is the prospects for the global economy and the possibility that we might be in depression by September, and what that might do to even a power as competent and powerful as China is now. And I can't go there, even for the main reason, because China is in such a situation right now, it couldn't do it forever, but it could probably get along for a year or two on just its own domestic consumption. And Russia is in a similar position. We forced them into it. Not quite as lucrative as China's is, but we forced them into this position of almost autarky, you know, where you can live off your own domestic doings.

You don't need the world, in other words. Now, you'd need the world to buy your products, particularly Russia with oil and gas, and China in terms of—I was looking at the list of—it was just renewables and things that might be considered as products leading to a more positive climate atmosphere. And China's so far ahead. They're hitting everything. And their battery technology is just awesome. I would want them, you know, if I were Trump, I would say, you need to bring one of your battery factories to the United States. We'll entertain you. We'll give you all kinds of benefits. We'll give you tax breaks and everything else, you know, like we did with Japan. But we're out of that game now, pretty much. We're out of the game. We're shutting down globalization, if you will.

That's tough. That's tough. But China and Russia could probably ride it out. Not so sure about India. India might have a little trouble riding it out, but not if China and Russia helped. So you could consolidate this shift of power by simply closing your doors and letting the other guy live on his own means, if you will, which aren't too vast. But Xi Jinping's got a real tough decision to make. Does he give Trump any hand at all? Or does he give him the back of his hand and send him home? And no matter how it might be satisfying for Xi and Wang and the rest of them to do that, and even for Putin to do that, ultimately, it's hard to imagine them doing it because they're, I want to say this carefully, both of them are bigger men than Donald Trump.

#Nima

Donald Trump coming back, we know what's going on with the Strait of Hormuz. It's not just about energy, because we know the situation in the case of Europe—jet fuel is running out in six weeks.

#Larry

Look at what the farmers are confronting. I'm hearing in this country that the farmers are up in arms right now, and they're making their views felt with the Republican Party because they don't see any future in the fall. They can't get fertilizer. They can't get the things they need to start their crops.

#Nima

In Europe, the same. I was watching a report in Europe where one of these potato producers in Italy was talking about how the cost of fuel and fertilizers and everything is just hitting the prices and increasing the prices. That shows that Donald Trump has some sort of limited time to decide about what it would be. Is it going to be a new escalation, a new round of war? Is it going to be, you know, airstrikes, sending fighter jets, bombing some places? You know, I don't see anything of that sort leading up to or ending up in any sort of substantial end to the conflict. But you've mentioned the ground invasion of Iran. I don't see that happening.

#Larry

I don't either.

#Nima

It's gonna be a bloodbath, in my opinion, and the third option would be just leaving the region. What is your understanding of Donald Trump coming back to the United States and deciding what he's gonna do? I have no idea what Donald Trump is going to do—none whatsoever.

#Larry

I can make some guesses about things that he might do that would be utterly ridiculous, because that seems to be his forte. But I have no idea what he's going to do. And it will, to a certain extent, depend on what Xi tells him and whether or not he's got any help forthcoming from that end or not. The other thing that I'm watching very closely—and these things are all connected, they're all connected—remember I told you about that arc of conflict that we've created? Well, right now, the Polish government in power is considering sort of offering the United States to become the new Germany. Think about that for a minute. Now, think about German-Polish relations over the last hundred-plus years, and think about Polish-Russian relations over that same time period, and think about inviting the United States, as it is pulling its troops out of Germany, to put them in Poland instead. That's seriously being considered.

#Nima

This is literally a new escalation—a drastic, devastating escalation.

#Larry

Just to show you how quickly we are marching along the path toward a global conflict. And, you know, the people I was talking to in Poland about it, they think—these particular people think—that their government is nuts, absolutely nuts. But they're apparently going to extend this invitation to Washington to replace Germany with Poland. Yeah. Who's dreaming these things up in the Pentagon? Yeah.

#Nima

Do you really believe the Pentagon has someone? I don't see Pete Hackett being capable of thinking this sort of thing.

#Larry

No. The guy is so much on the surface. One of my friends—I spent most of my Army career in the Pacific—this particular individual spent most of his time in Europe. And he said, "Oh, don't you know what's happening there? They want to change those beautiful German girls for beautiful Polish girls." There's a lot of truth to that sort of thing, you know. They like that cushy life, and they think they'll get just as cushy a life in Poland, maybe even better. I mean, that's what you do when you become an empire, you know. You man the world with your forces, and those forces get accustomed to being in that world, and those forces actually themselves generate conflict, you know.

#Nima

Yeah, let's see what would happen. I think what is happening in China is going to be so important for the future of both the conflict in Ukraine and in the Middle East.

#Larry

And it might be very important for what's going to happen, say, in June, July, August, September, with regard to global commerce.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. By the way, we're going to talk about it on Friday. We're going to get back. Larry going to be there? Yeah. It's going to be you, me, and Larry on Friday at 11 a.m. Yeah.

#Larry

I got it this time.

#Nima

See you soon, Larry. Yeah, great pleasure as always. Take care. Take care. Bye-bye.