

Col. Larry Wilkerson: Iran vs Israel: Is War Inevitable?

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#Nima

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 somehow negative. 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 have time to read it. 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. You know, 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 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 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

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. But just think about that comment though, that you just made. Think about that comment for a moment.

#Larry

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 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 this agreement.

#Larry

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, you know, 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 that...

#Larry

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 he doesn'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 it 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. And 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 eligible 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 how 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 very heavily hit in this next one. 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, you know, 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 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 is 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.