

Larry Johnson & Wilkerson: Who Controls the Next Move? US, China & the Gulf

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#Nima

He said that, Larry, he said that you have to choose. You want to confront? We can confront. You want to cooperate? We are ready to cooperate. And this is, I think, one of the main messages from China. We know that the Iranian foreign minister went to China before this meeting between Donald Trump and Xi. And next Wednesday, we're going to have Russian President Vladimir Putin going to China and talking with him, Larry. How do you see the way that China, Russia, and Iran are solidifying or improving the sort of partnership they have to confront these kinds of policies on the part of Washington to influence their countries?

#Larry

Well, there's something big underway behind the scenes that is not in public. I have received this information from, I'll call it, a source with access to Pakistan's intelligence service. The comments that both Putin and Wang Yi made after meeting in Karachi regarding a new security architecture for the Gulf were not just offhand remarks. There is an actual planning effort, negotiation effort underway, and it is concentrated on Qatar and Saudi Arabia. And part of the reason Pakistan is playing a leading role in this, with the encouragement and, if not the direction, of China, is that Pakistan has a bilateral security treaty with the Saudis.

So, the reason they're focused on Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as I mentioned earlier, is those two countries produce helium, sulfur, urea, and liquefied natural gas. I mean, Qatar accounts for 10% of the global supply of liquefied natural gas. Think about that. It's the fourth largest after Russia, the United States, Norway, and then, I think, Qatar. So, you know, it's not insignificant. And the entire idea behind this new security architecture is to expel the U.S. military presence from the Persian Gulf, because the only reason it's there is to attack Iran. So, get that out of there to create an incentive for both the Saudis and the Qataris to distance themselves from the United States.

Because in the past, part of that relationship of having the security blanket of Uncle Sam was you also had to buy Uncle Sam's treasury bills, and you had to buy Uncle Sam's shitty military equipment. Well, now that's starting to go away. And so Iran is not just a passive observer in this.

Iran is directly involved in coordinating with both China and Russia, and China is playing a major role here. And that's why I think Trump sought to get the Chinese intervention — help us get those Iranians under control — and China's basic word was, no, no, it's you who are the problem, not them, which is, you know, shocking for someone like Donald Trump. So this is — it's not, you know, they're not announcing this — but this is happening behind the scenes. And I think this is terribly, terribly significant.

#Nima

Larry, is that related to this sort of news that came out about a non-aggression pact between, you know—because they're talking about a new pact between Iran and Arab states? Yes, basically Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Oh, yeah, a non-aggression pact.

#Lawrence

Absolutely. And one thing, just to reinforce what Larry said, I have it on fairly good authority that Netanyahu had a trip planned to Islamabad, but what's happening right now has delayed that. But I'm quite confident that one of the things he wants to do is start a diplomatic action and otherwise to counter some of this, because he sees it as being counter to his interests, as well he should. His political turmoil right now, though, is deepening every moment. I don't know what's going to happen. The vote of no confidence procedure in the Knesset is very different.

And I think what he's done is forestall a precipitate vote of no confidence by simply going for the bigger one, which puts it out to almost what an election would be anyway. So he feels like he's got the time to regain lost ground and such. And frankly, there's no one in the opposition who looks like they're any better than Netanyahu. That's got voters probably puzzled as to whom they might vote for. But he's concerned about what's happening. There's no way he doesn't know about what Larry just said. Yeah.

#Nima

Colonel, here is what Donald Trump said about the reason for the war on Iran.

#Speaker 04

We don't need it at all. We don't need it at all. Fair enough. So, I mean, you could make the case, you know, like, why are we even doing it? We're doing it to help Israel and to help Saudi Arabia and to help Qatar and the UAE and, you know, Kuwait and other countries, Bahrain.

#Speaker 05

It also helps China.

#Speaker 04

I told him today, I said, you know, we're helping you. And we're helping you in another way, because I don't think China wants Iran to have a nuclear weapon either. I said, just don't go crazy. You don't need them having a nuclear weapon either.

#Speaker 05

What did he say?

#Speaker 04

Well, he's not going to respond to much. He's a pretty cool guy. He's not going to say, "Oh, gee, that's a good point." What's he going to do?

#Speaker 05

What a wonderful point. You think he agreed? Yeah, I think that was the impression.

#Speaker 04

I don't think he wants him to. No, he would like to see it end, but he's been good about it.

#Lawrence

Sean Hannity's leading the person he's interviewing is so obvious. I think he must have gotten lawyer training.

#Nima

Yeah. Colonel, what he said about the reasons for the war is about Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. I don't see that happening in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. They don't see this war as helping them in any sort, in any aspect. Exactly the opposite. Yeah, they see how this war is hitting them, destroying their countries, their economy.

#Lawrence

Exactly the opposite. You're perfectly right there. You know, we forget—some people do anyway—that China was a very vested party to the JCPOA. And China showed during that time, through its negotiating and through its diplomacy, that it was indeed concerned about another violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and another nuclear power violation. And it was convinced that the diplomacy that was going to take place with the Europeans and with us and others was going to be successful and would be good because they didn't want another nuclear power in the world. I don't

think any of the vested nuclear powers want other nuclear powers in the world. Not really. In fact, I would say that the better amongst them want the numbers to go down, not up, but at best or at worst to stay stable.

So China was all for that. But China has seen what has morphed out of that with Donald Trump in particular, and Joe Biden—I can't let him out of this bag either. Since that JCPOA, and Biden was an enemy of the JCPOA because Blinken and Sullivan, his right-hand men as vice president, were an enemy of the JCPOA. They dared not let Obama get any sign of it, but they were, and they showed their true colors as soon as they came out, just like they did toward Cuba. Rapprochement achieved positive relations developing. They killed it. They murdered it in its crib. So a lot of the blame goes back to Biden, not only for that, but for Ukraine and a host of other things that we did very badly in his time, mostly due to Blinken and Sullivan.

I don't know if Biden was even sentient at the time. So you've got a situation now where China has changed completely because of what we've done. I'm not saying they're in favor of Iran getting a nuclear weapon. I don't think they are. Just as I said, in general, they're not in favor of that. But they have changed because we have forced them to change. And this is one of those things that I was talking about that Xi has told people to watch very carefully. Because if there is something the United States is doing that is disturbing our march toward championship, we want to do something about it. And that's where he is now. And he is doing something about it as best he can.

#Nima

Yeah. Larry, when it comes to the Iranian nuclear program, it didn't seem that China responded to the comments of Donald Trump. But we know that Iran doesn't want nuclear weapons. It's not something new to announce that. Let's condemn Iran for pursuing nuclear weapons? They don't want it. That's why they were negotiating with the United States before this war started.

#Larry

Yeah, well, look, number one, I would ask anyone that has not read the JCPOA, that agreement that was inked with Iran, please go read it, because the amount of propaganda that's put out about it is just absurd, because you realize it was a robust agreement. Now, one of the propaganda lines in the West is that, oh, Obama gave back, gave all these billions of dollars to Iran. Well, number one, their money. Yeah, it was their money. They had paid U.S. arms dealers money. This was when the Shah was in power. So Iran had purchased weapons that were to be delivered to Iran. And then once the Shah went away, the United States said, oh, we're just going to keep the damn money.

Well, the courts then decided, no, you can't do that. But the United States has continued to hold it. The other thing to recognize is when that JCPOA was signed, both China and Russia at the time agreed to enforce pretty onerous sanctions on Iran if it didn't comply. And this is what makes it even more astonishing how stupid Donald Trump was in abrogating and tearing up that agreement.

Because if the goal really was to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, that did it. But, you know, again, as I've argued before, the whole issue about Iran getting a nuke, that's just a sideshow. It's just an excuse to go in and try to find a reason to destroy the Iranian government.

Because when you explain to people that, at least within Shia theology, the Shia are very consistent in that it is a sin to kill noncombatants. It's okay, you know, guys carrying guns and shooting back at you, you can kill them, that's okay. But you don't kill women and children, you don't slaughter innocents. And it's quite different from the Wahhabi and the Deobandi philosophy. And that's why they, in fact, that's one of the principal reasons behind Ayatollah Khamenei's fatwa against a nuclear weapon, because a nuclear weapon is an indiscriminate weapon that kills innocents. And that's why it's a sin. And so you've got to applaud the Iranian Islamic Republic for at least having some shred of humanity that Israel and the United States clearly do not.

So the fact that, you know, China's presented, you want to help us keep Iran from getting a nuclear weapon? Yeah, sure, because they're not trying to get one. I'm sure China has that assurance so far from Iran. And that's why, you know, while, you know, for those who are, you know, of a Hollywood movie mentality, yeah, get the nuke and that'll put you on even keel. The fact of the matter is, Iran, with its conventional weapons, conventional ballistic missiles, has proven a formidable foe that has defeated a world superpower and one of the leading militaries, if not considered the most powerful military in the Middle East. Iran stopped them. And the rest of the world is watching, going, huh, how about that? Maybe the West is not as tough as we thought they were.

#Lawrence

Nima, this is the one place where I will take exception to what Larry just said. I don't think we have what we had with the Ayatollah. I think what we have right now is a very, very rational military force, the IRGC, in charge of Iran for all intents and purposes. And I think what they have concluded, despite some of their Islamic leanings, if you will, which Larry elaborated on, and I agree with that to this point, I think they have an undisclosed facility deep underground. And I think they're very capable now of making a warhead, matching it with one of their faster missiles, and somehow, as the North Koreans did, announcing it—how they'll do that.

I'm not quite sure, but I'll remind everybody that China was deadly opposed to all the Kims—Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, and Kim Jong-un—getting a nuclear weapon. They were our most potent ally, and Russia was right behind them at the time. I dare say they aren't anymore at trying to talk Pyongyang out of a nuclear weapon—more potent than we were in many respects—which is why we continually hosted the six-party talks in Beijing, one of the reasons anyway. I think that whole thing has broken down now, and it's broken down with China and Russia also with regard to Iran becoming a nuclear power, because they understand, I think, that at heart, the only reason they're going to want this is a deterrent.

They don't want to use anybody, but they want a deterrent. And the world has demonstrated to them, primarily through the DPRK experience, that if you get one—and the Qaddafi experience, he's dead now, and his country's in turmoil—North Korea is, you know, the dynasty is fine, and North Korea is, in their respect, fine. And it's all, in their minds, due to the possession of a nuclear weapon. I don't think they have any intent of using it. I really don't. And increasingly, the South has been kind of talked out of its trajectory toward perhaps having one, partly by that. And there are talks going on between Pyongyang and Seoul. So I disagree there, that they might find it convenient, even part of their survival, to have one in that still very dangerous region.

#Larry

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I don't necessarily disagree with the good colonel, because you can come up with a very rational argument why they now say, hey, look, we've tried to play it the Western way, and they keep betraying us repeatedly. And so the only way we're going to have guaranteed safety is, you know, we're going to have to build our own and let them know. But again, I come back to the whole nuclear issue. I call it a red herring, because let's assume that the nuclear issue is off the table. The West still wants to destroy the Islamic Republic. So it doesn't matter what Iran does. Because remember, when we were backing Saddam in 1980, '81 through '88, and that whole war that was waged against Iran, Iran wasn't looking for a nuke back then. That had nothing to do with it. We hate the concept of an Islamic Republic.

#Lawrence

Yeah, I think you're absolutely right there.

#Nima

I can confirm that there are... in Israel.

#Lawrence

You've got to think about Israel in this too. Netanyahu is just such a freaking maniac. I have no doubt that he would use a nuclear weapon, and I'm sure they feel the same way in Tehran.

#Nima

Exactly, Larry. That's the main critical discussion right now in Tehran among the high-ranking people about what they are going to do with Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel if they decide to do something against Iran with nuclear weapons, if they decide to attack Iran every two months, every six months. What would be the response from Iran, and how can they respond to reduce that sort of threat? Just remember what has happened so far with the war against Iran. They have destroyed much

infrastructure in Iran. They killed many people, innocent people, civilians. They don't want to get back to this sort of situation they're in right now. That's the huge question on their part: what are we going to do with that?

#Lawrence

And as I understand Brad Cooper's testimony to Congress, that wasn't necessarily open, we're planning on, if we do it, being as destructive as several nuclear weapons would be on Iran in this next riposte if we execute it. So, I mean, you really have lots of incentive there. I wouldn't, as a military person in particular, but as a human being, I wouldn't blame them at all.

#Larry

Mm-hmm.

#Nima

Here is, Larry, what Donald Trump said about the little cleanup he has to do in Iran.

#Speaker 05

You ask for favors, you have to do favors in return. We don't need favors. We wiped out their armed forces, essentially. We may have to do a little cleanup work because we had a little month-long ceasefire, I guess you'd call it, but we have a blockade that's so effective, that's why we did the ceasefire. We really did the ceasefire at the request of other nations.

#Nima

Yeah. What does that mean? Literally, in Iran, they say there is no difference right now between the President of the United States and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel.

#Larry

Correct.

#Nima

They're two merging with each other. They're basically the same sort of policies and the same sort of mindsets.

#Larry

Unless we see an order given throughout CENTCOM to start withdrawing assets from the theater, then I assure you that the United States will renew an attack on Iran. And this next round, while Trump, again, in his delusion, oh, we've destroyed their military capability. Well, if you have, then why isn't the Strait of Hormuz open? Well, you know, if you've really wiped it out, if all the ships are at the bottom of the sea, then what is there left to punch back with? And, you know, Trump, in one of his recent social posts, accused anybody who suggests that Iran's missile force is largely intact of being a traitor and guilty of treason. You know, just crazy, crazy talk. So, you know, Trump is going to have to learn the hard way.

If he authorizes new strikes, which I believe he will, the Iranian retaliation will be far more devastating to the United States. Now, the wild card here is what are Qatar and Saudi Arabia going to do? Because this will be what they call the nut-cutting moment. If they allow the United States to use their facilities—in Qatar, it's Al Udeid. I mean, that is still the largest base throughout the Middle East. And then the Saudis with Prince Saud Air Base. I was just actually yesterday, one of my neighbors said—he's a pilot—and I got talking to him, and he mentioned that his son was over in Saudi Arabia. I said, what is he? He goes, oh, he's Air Force. He's flying KC-135s. And I went, Jesus, man.

I said, they don't have protection. He goes, I know. He says, the only good news, he says, my son gets to come back next week because his wife is having their first child. And so he got leave to do that. I said, good. But all of our guys that are over there right now, they need to get the hell out, be pulled out. But the question remains, will the Saudis allow the United States to continue to conduct air operations? If the Saudis and Qataris shut that down, then that's going to make the United States pause. Again, that's one of these other wild cards that even though Trump wants to give the order, Admiral Cooper is going to have to come back and say, hey, boss, we don't have the access to Qatar and Saudi Arabia that we did before.

And I guarantee you, if the Saudis and Qataris aren't on board, Kuwait's not going to stick its neck out. It's going to say, oh, yeah. And so all of a sudden, the United States is going to be faced with not having the bases to launch the refueling aircraft. And understand that I think they're keeping, like, the F-35s farther to the west in Jordan at the Muwaffaq al-Salti Air Base. So if they fly to—you know, if they're going to fly to drop ordnance on Iran—the distance from Muwaffaq al-Salti Air Base to Riyadh is over 800 miles. The combat radius of an F-35, as I understand it, is like 550 miles. So that means they've got to be refueled before they even get to a point in Riyadh where they could potentially launch a JASSM. A JASSM has a range of about 500 miles.

And then they have to immediately turn around and get refueled again. What we're talking about is, if you're going—and the plan is for 500 targets—if you're going after 500 targets, you've got 500 aircraft in the air, or at least more than 100 or 200. And if you've got to do refueling for 200 aircraft, I mean, this thing gets enormously complex. So that's where, in a way, the Saudis and Qataris, I think, hold the key to whether or not the United States will actually be able to renew this offensive.

They want to. But then you get down to the practical nuts and bolts of the logistics. Do they have the logistics that can actually support it?

#Lawrence

There was an article in Haaretz the other day, too, Nima, that was interesting from the point of view that that newspaper was reporting it. But it was reporting it from a different angle than Larry was just discussing, which is an important angle militarily. It was saying the Israeli IDF/AF is really angry with the United States because of all the space they're taking on their airfields.

#Nima

Basically, in Ben-Gurion, they have just a lot of C-130s and other airplanes at Ben-Gurion Airport. And Larry, when it comes to Saudi Arabia, we have a report from Bloomberg saying that during the recent war—you know, the war between Iran and the United States—the UAE leader, MBZ, Mohammed bin Zayed, personally called the leaders of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, proposing to form an Arab coalition against Iran, but every country refused, according to this report from Bloomberg. How do you find that? You know, we have two sort of arguments. On one side, we are hearing that Saudi Arabia was trying to convince the United States to continue the war. On the other hand, we are hearing from Saudi Arabia that this war has to end. We have to find other solutions because our economy is just in bad shape right now and we cannot make money.

#Larry

That is the key thing to look at in terms of the disruption of the flow of those five commodities I talked about earlier: oil, liquefied natural gas, urea, helium, sulfur. When you look overall, within the scope of the Gulf Arabs, the oil flow is most critical here. For the Saudis, their major income stream is from the export of oil and the export of sulfur. For Qatar, their major income stream is from the liquefied natural gas, the urea, and the helium. And, yeah, they also pump some oil. Everybody else is also primarily dependent on oil that's getting exported. And if it's not getting exported, they don't have the cash flow.

So they are looking to get that whole process back online so that they do have some cash flow. And this is where the UAE is now in a bit of trouble because before, they still had Fujairah Port, which was on the Gulf of Oman. So it was considered outside of the Strait of Hormuz. It was not easy for Iran to block it. Well, Iran blew it up. And now they don't have that anymore. So their cash flow is cut off. And this is, you know, I feel like the voice crying in the wilderness with respect to the economic implications of the shutdown of this place. Now we're going on, we're approaching 80 days, and it is devastating. The global impact on the shortages is significant.

Just as an example, here in the United States, it was Shell and Mobil Oil that informed Costco and Walmart. So the two big, you know, these are big stores which sell cut-rate items. They said, you

know, all that oil we give you or we sell you that you put on your shelves for people to do their own oil change in their vehicles, we don't have anymore. So those shelves are now going to be empty. Toyota issued a bulletin to its U.S. distributors that, hey, you know, usually they use like eight-weight oil for oil changes. They're now saying, well, you can use 16-weight or 20-weight because we don't have any more of the eight-weight, and the others are going to be scarce too. So this is starting now to hit. Watch out.

#Lawrence

I'm getting an oil change next week. Yeah.

#Larry

Get it while you can, my friend. Get it while you can. So this cascade effect is starting, and it is significant. And the problem is, it's not until the full rage of this economic crisis punch in the gut comes, you know, becomes so apparent that Trump is actually going to have to cave. And we saw Trump just before he got on the plane, when he was asked about the economic circumstances for Americans, he basically said, I don't care. Not my problem. Well, it's going to become his problem. You watch. In fact, today, you know, during this whole China trip, the stock market, it's sort of up to over 40, you know, 50,000 again. It's dropped now about 500 points on the Dow Jones. It's down on the NASDAQ as well and the S&P. It's starting to fall. And the realities of the supply shortages are going to start hitting. They're hitting this week. It's going to be worse next week. It's going to be worse the week after.