

Iran Just **BLINDSIDED** Trump in Strait of Hormuz, War **IMMINENT** | Alexander Mercuris

Alexander Mercuris of The Duran joins the show to discuss Iran's game changing move on the Strait of Hormuz that casts high suspicion on reported efforts of a "peace" deal on the part of the Trump administration. War is imminent, and Alexander breaks down the massive geopolitical dimensions of the rapidly evolving situation. Alexander's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@AlexMercuris> The Duran YouTube show: <https://www.youtube.com/@TheDuran/> SUPPORT THE SHOW: [PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG](https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong) Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai...> Substack: [chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com](https://www.substack.com/p/chroniclesofhaiphong) Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> Follow me on Telegram: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong> #iran #usnavy #trump

#Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the program. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I'm joined by Alexander Mercuris of The Duran, as well as his own channel, geopolitical analyst and commentator, friend of the show. Alexander, good to see you again. I'm very happy, delighted to be here again, Danny. Yes, very happy to have you. Everyone, hit the like button as you come on. Help boost the show. And we'll just get started. How about some news about the Strait of Hormuz? I think this has blindsided Trump a bit because there are all kinds of talks.

And I'll ask you later about whether we are witnessing another kind of negotiations leading to a war situation, because right now there's all kinds of optimistic talk about the possibility of a deal. But we also have Iran at the same time. So the Persian Gulf Strait Authority, their mechanism, has essentially announced expanded control of the Strait of Hormuz, going all the way into the Emirates, the United Arab Emirates, including the port of Fujairah — a massive, thousands of kilometers of territory there — that they're claiming is now going to be under their authority, given what's happened in the war.

And there's also talk — Marco Rubio, Trump — they say no tolls, no nothing for the Strait of Hormuz. Well, Iran and Oman are in talks about a fee system. They're not calling it a toll, but Iran is calling it a fee system to ensure ongoing remuneration during its authority over the Strait of Hormuz. So, Alexander, yeah, there's all kinds of talks about talks again. But the last few times this has happened, we've seen escalation. And I'm wondering what you make of these moves around the Strait of Hormuz and the larger geopolitical picture that I think Trump has not really seen coming, but it just keeps happening anyway. And what are your thoughts about this?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, I think your last point is absolutely the correct one. Now, all the logic, if you apply logic — which, of course, is in short supply — but all the logic points to the need for negotiations. The United States started this war against Iran on the 28th of February. They were convinced that Iran would collapse very quickly. They discounted the threat of a closure of the Strait of Hormuz or of Iran taking control of the Strait of Hormuz. It turned out that Iran did not collapse quickly. Instead, Iran hit back. The United States took damage — serious damage. We're learning all the time how serious that damage was. The allies of the United States in the region — the Saudis, the Qataris, the Emiratis — all of them, they took damage too. The Iranians imposed their control of the Strait of Hormuz.

All those who discounted their ability to do that were proved completely wrong. And what Donald Trump now finds himself in is this situation where things have turned out not only not as he expected that they would, but far worse than he could ever have possibly imagined. Iran has come out strong. Its armed forces are intact. It controls the Strait of Hormuz, and it has a lock grip on the energy flows upon which the entire global economy and ultimately the United States itself depends. Now, in this situation, the logic points to Donald Trump beginning negotiations and starting negotiations in earnest. But his personal vanity, the political needs of the moment — I mean, he doesn't want to be the president who negotiates and agrees to Iranian terms, which are going to be much tougher than those he could have had in February.

Anyway, the political needs of Donald Trump, and also the feeling in Washington and Tel Aviv and other places that the United States cannot start a war against a country like Iran and lose and make concessions — all that makes negotiations all but impossible. So you have this extraordinarily bizarre situation where all sorts of people are coming forward with proposals. Documents are being passed backwards and forwards via Pakistan between Iran and the United States. But nobody's actually sitting down and talking. And the result is that we get documents which aren't taking us any further. And a document then is presented on Donald Trump's desk. He sees what the Iranians are demanding, and he loses his temper. And we still have another cycle of escalation and warnings and threats, which he then has to roll back. That's the summary of the situation as I see it.

#Danny

Yeah, I mean, we're hearing — I mean, I've been seeing on X and in various news, you know, corporate media outlets — that in the next few hours there's going to be this final agreement that will initiate talks. And I've been seeing that "next few hours" now for probably 12 to 16, almost a day, hearing this, that there's going to be this final agreement. And then it seems like both sides are throwing a bit of cold water on it.

And we also have reports that the UAE, even Qatar — Qatar may be participating in this process to some degree — but we have reports that the UAE, Qatar, and other Gulf states are urging the Saudis as well, urging Donald Trump not to restart escalation at this time. Do you believe any of this? Because at the same time, we also have Israel saying a surprise attack by Iran is coming soon. This is from Israeli intelligence. And if we don't strike, then this is what's going to occur. Do you believe any of this? Do you feel like this is just another plausible deniability situation where we're looking at war coming at any moment?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, you know, you have every reason to say that. And experience shows that we have to take that into account. And it's not impossible. I mean, all of these Persian Gulf states that are supposed to be begging Donald Trump to hold off from launching a war and another attack on Iran were the same Persian Gulf states which were pretending last year that they were not in favor of a war against Iran, but which we now have every reason to believe almost certainly were urging it, secretly urging it. So they have a record of duplicity in this, and we can't take their public announcements seriously. Against that, the war was launched on the 28th of February, and it has turned out terribly, disastrously wrong for them. The United States didn't prevail quickly.

The Strait of Hormuz was closed to commercial shipping. The Iranians are now levying fees on ships that they allow through. Their infrastructure, the infrastructure of the Persian Gulf states, was very badly damaged. Um, they see that American air defenses don't work in the way that they were supposed to work. They read all the reports that the United States has depleted its arsenals heavily, and they're also reading bizarre stories that are floating around that the person the Americans wanted to put in charge in Iran was none other than Ahmadinejad. And the Saudis, if they read these articles, will be saying to themselves, these people are out of their senses. They don't know what they're doing. So all of that must be undermining confidence right across the Persian Gulf.

And people may very well be saying to themselves, well, if the Americans failed after 40 days, why expect that they're going to succeed? If we get thrown back into another war, then all that's going to do is result in further massive damage to ourselves. And always in the background, there's the fear that the Iranians might attack the desalination plants. And at the same time, whilst the Strait of Hormuz remains under Iranian control in the way that it is, whilst we have this situation of no war, no peace, there's also the problem that all of these countries are losing money. And they're losing money not just because they're not able to sell their oil and their gas and their naphtha and their helium and all of these things, but also because there's apparently very heavy capital outflow out of the Persian Gulf.

Money's pouring into Hong Kong and Singapore because people are losing confidence in the stability and security of the region. So I can imagine that they're telling the Americans, please don't do this again. It's only going to make the situation worse this time. Please see whether you can come to a

deal with the Iranians. It makes sense that they would do so, um, and I can imagine that that dynamic on the part of the Arab states has changed. As for the Israelis, they have a completely different agenda. They want regime change in Iran. The business, as far as they're concerned, is unfinished. They want to talk up the threat from Iran, and they want the war to start all over again. So you could see that there is this potential divergence.

#Danny

Well, I'll just pull up the report that I was citing from because I think it's instructive here. It's from the Jerusalem Post: "Iran could launch a surprise attack against Gulf states," Israel says. Israeli officials and Israeli intelligence warn of a potential surprise Iranian attack in Gulf states and Israel. This comes as U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel disagree on how to proceed with attacks on Tehran. And so this is coming from top military leaders and the defense minister of Israel.

Security officials know that Tehran might attempt to act before the U.S. and Israel decide that the diplomatic path is no longer viable and launch a surprise attack similar to the one at the start of Operation Epic Fury and Roaring Lion, which is really rich, Alexander, because that wasn't a surprise attack at all. That was a complete response. It was very fast, and I think it really caught Israel and the United States off guard with how rapidly Iran was able to galvanize its military capabilities. But it was certainly not a surprise. Iran was saying from the very get-go for, I don't know, how many weeks leading into that escalation, that there would be a response no matter what. But your thoughts on this? I mean, this seems to be laying the groundwork for some kind of provocation.

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, it is. That's exactly what it is. There is an enormous Israeli campaign to get the war restarted. They do not want a negotiated deal, an end to this crisis. They want regime change in Iran. That is what, from an Israeli point of view, this whole exercise is all about. Absolutely, they do not want a resolution of this crisis, which might end with Iran looking the winner, which it is increasingly starting to look like. So they do what they've been doing now for the last 20-plus years. They talk up the threat from Iran. They've been talking up the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons, something that's never happened. And now they're talking about Iran launching a preemptive strike.

When Iran has never launched any sort of preemptive strike. I mean, the attack that they carried out at the start of the 40 Days War happened after the United States and Israel attacked them. That was a response. It was not a preemptive attack by the Iranians. So the Iranians have never shown this pattern up to now. They've always responded, and they've responded toughly, but they've responded. The only people who are threatening to start the war at the moment, who want to start the war at the moment, are the Israelis and the Americans, and that's the simple reality. Iran has nothing to gain by launching an attack of that kind. What have you made of, uh...

#Danny

You know, Robert Kagan and your work, Alexander, of analyzing not just the mindset but also the actions of neocons is years and years' worth. And so I'm curious about your thoughts on what you make of Robert Kagan's now seemingly pretty scathing assessments of the situation regarding Iran. The latest one he wrote, again in *The Atlantic*, has to do with Trump. Essentially, his endgame is going to be surrender — that's what he claims. And this is a follow-up in *The Atlantic* to his article that earlier this month said that the United States was defeated and that it doesn't really have any options left on the table. He's saying that Trump is hoping to slip away out of this without Americans noticing the magnitude of the defeat.

And he goes over all of the machinations around Trump in this article — you know, threats leading to so-called peace talks. And then Iran has said that they're not really actually engaged in peace talks; they're only engaged in demanding their rights. They're not even talking about concessions or anything like that back and forth. What do you make of that? I mean, this is pretty unprecedented, given that the neocons, in many respects, are the engineers of U.S. aggression against Iran. And it seems like the entirety of their Middle East policy was actually geared toward this. And now it seems like a pretty big reversal. I'm curious what your thoughts are on what's explaining this.

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, first of all, you're absolutely right. I mean, Robert Kagan and the other neocons clustered around him have been advocating a war against Iran for the last 25 years. And now that the war was launched and they got their war, and it didn't turn out as they expected, they're doing two things. Firstly, they are quietly preparing the ground for saying that the reason it didn't really succeed is because Donald Trump mishandled it. I mean, talking about Donald Trump failing to win, Iran achieving this victory. But of course, what they will all say is that this all happened on Trump's watch, that it's his fault that this has ended as disastrously as it has. That's one part of their agenda. But the other part of their agenda is to goad Trump and to put pressure on him, and to get their friends in Congress to put pressure on him as well.

And what they're saying is, look, if you do a deal with the Iranians, the kind of deal which, as we said at the start of this program, it is logical for Trump to do at this time, given that the military option has been unsuccessful. What they will do is they will say that is a surrender. You have surrendered the strategic position of the United States. You have humiliated the United States. You can't possibly allow that to happen. So what you must do instead is keep the war going, escalate, as our friends in Israel demand. And ultimately, if you go back to the first *Atlantic* article, you see what basically Kagan is pushing towards, which is a ground operation, an actual ground invasion of Iran. That's the only thing they have left.

#Danny

And I don't know if you saw, after that initial article, then you had John Bolton write in the Washington Post a much more direct call for that exact thing — for an escalation, for heavier strikes coupled with a ground operation — which Kagan, in his piece, was very circumspect to try to circle around. He didn't want to say it directly, but he was making hints that you either go all the way or you go home. Go hard or go home, as they say.

#Alexander Mercouris

Go hard. Go home. Go home. But then be blamed for the surrender and the defeat, which of course they know perfectly well Trump doesn't want to see happen. So it's putting pressure on him to escalate the war, and to escalate the war into something which so far we've managed to avoid and which would be an absolute catastrophe.

#Danny

What happens, Alexander, because we have a lot of fronts happening at the same time right now. You know, we have, on the one hand, what did Donald Trump say about his son's wedding? He said he can't go because he has this thing called Iran to take care of, which got some, of course, Western media sources a bit concerned about what he actually meant by that. Because there are also reports in Reuters that nobody really knows what Donald Trump means when he Truth Socials out foreign policy commentaries. This dates back to the civilization-ending Truth Social posts, which European diplomats had no idea what he meant. They asked State Department officials, what did he mean? And they said, no idea, because they were concerned.

Are you going to use a nuke? You know, we're kind of vulnerable to anything that happens with Iran. We're not that far from Iran. Nonetheless, this is kind of the situation. So what happens, though, Alexander, with all these fronts happening? The U.S.—it's not as if we, you know, we've talked about sequencing on this program before—it's not as if the Ukraine situation has really died down. There seems to be a push now toward Ukraine, Cuba, to try to get some kind of win. There's also a lot of hopes that the China talks have led to a pullback, but Donald Trump has made no real indications that much will change there, other than the fact that they don't have enough air defenses and missiles to protect Taiwan.

They can't even get this package through because of it. So what happens at the Strait of Hormuz, Alexander, essentially opens up even further. We see more shipping activity now at the behest of Iran, and this is what Iran has said they want. They want full activity through it, but with their coordination. The longer this goes on, that could become more and more possible—maybe not fully possible, but more and more possible. Well, I would have thought that the absolute final strategic disaster for the United States is basically what you've just discussed.

#Alexander Mercouris

In other words, that the Iranians come to some kind of understanding with the other Persian Gulf states. Even now it's starting to look like the Emiratis are starting to shift their position. The Persian Gulf states lose faith in the United States. They no longer believe that the U.S. is able to defeat Iran or force open the Strait of Hormuz. So they say to themselves, well, who can open the Strait of Hormuz? Iran can. So let's do a deal with them. Let's sort out some kind of arrangements in the Persian Gulf that work to everybody's advantage, in the sense that we can get our oil cargos through and Iran can pick up the fees.

And we tell the Americans, you know, thank you very much, but please go. Now, that is a nightmare scenario for the U.S. because it means that U.S. influence in the Persian Gulf area has collapsed, that Iran has emerged as the dominant power in at least that absolutely critical part of the Middle East. And of course, Iran is part of BRICS. So where Iran basically wins through, you could argue the BRICS influence expands as well. So I think the Americans will not want that to happen, and they have various tools to prevent it from happening.

All of the currencies of all the Persian Gulf states are pegged to the dollar, for example, and that gives the U.S. influence. And they will do what they can, as I said, to sabotage this from happening, and they might succeed. But with every day that this continues without any sign of any resolution, the possibility that the Persian Gulf states finally say enough's enough grows. We might not like the Iranians very much. We might have all kinds of issues with them. They are a revolutionary government, and we are conservative monarchies, so that makes it very uncomfortable. But in spite of that, we have to survive. We have to do business, and that means we have to do business with Iran. So that possibility does grow.

#Danny

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, there's also been this—I don't know how this helps matters at all, Alexander—but there's also been drone strike activity, drone attack activity in these countries. The United States, of course, Donald Trump has said it very openly himself, he wants the UAE, he wants the Gulf countries to essentially assume responsibility for any future war, especially the UAE, which has been really honed in on as the prize, the crown jewel of restarting the war in the Gulf.

But, um, they've been attacked, and it's certainly—I mean, we don't have proof, but it's certainly likely not Iran. There's been almost daily drone activity, air defenses activated, according to the UAE's Ministry of Defense, whatever that's worth. And some of that feels like, or has felt like, some kind of way to justify not only restarting the war, but to almost maybe punish or bludgeon the Gulf states into being ready to restart the war when they may not be so excited, given the economic consequences just outlined. Yeah.

#Alexander Mercouris

Absolutely. I think that is probably what is going on. Again, I don't myself see any reason to think that the Iranians have any interest in restarting the war on a big scale against all of these countries. What do they gain by doing so? If they attack and openly go on the attack, then they lose one of their biggest moral and, by the way, political advantages in this conflict, which is that they are the victims of aggression. It looks as if, on the contrary, they are prepared to attack themselves, and they lend weight to the propaganda narrative about them that the Israelis in particular have been very active spreading, as I said, over at least two decades now. So it doesn't make sense that Iran would want another war with all of the Persian Gulf states. And it could very well be that all of these pinprick attacks that are taking place are exactly, as you say, an attempt by someone.

And we've just had this article from Israel telling us, you know, the Iranians are going to attack. It might be an attempt by someone to create the impression that that is about to happen. I would just mention one other possibility, which is that, of course, from an Iranian point of view, you could argue—and I'm not saying this is the case, by the way—but you could argue that keeping a certain buzz of military activity going in the Persian Gulf, keeping some kind of tension there, but not up to the level of outright war, is useful. It reminds the Persian Gulf states of how vulnerable ultimately they are. Whereas if nothing like that was happening, there would be a degree of complacency setting in, and the Persian Gulf states might revert to their natural stance, which is to support the Americans and the Israelis. So you can argue that. I'm not saying that is the case, because obviously I don't know.

#Danny

No, I mean, it's a very good point. And I think what makes it even, I guess, more suspicious then, because I think Iran would have every, even every right to, given that the war—I mean, there's a ceasefire, yes, that they agreed to—but in all honesty, it almost feels like a ceasefire in name only. Like, the U.S. has kept the blockade going. There has been some kinetic activity in the last month or so in the Persian Gulf from the United States. But what makes this so suspicious now, too, is that if it were the case that Iran were keeping up some level of military activity, given its history, it has been very open about the fact that they have operations. And I don't know if they would keep those operations secret. And even if they did, what would stop Iran?

The UAE, what would stop the Saudis? Because those attacks were supposedly not very effective at all in Saudi Arabia. But in the UAE, especially since it's been more than a handful of times now that this has happened, what stops them from proving that it's Iran that's doing it? Especially if there's all this motivation to restart the war on the part of the United States and Israel. And then, of course, there are the curious reports about Western borders, that the drones are coming from there. And then, of course, we now know that Israel, with U.S. help, has clandestine bases in Iraq, which gives one pause as to maybe those could be used for such an attack. But exactly as you said, there are reasons for it, but it's very questionable that there's this layer of secrecy and mystery about it.

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, indeed, absolutely. I mean, you're absolutely right about this. I mean, we're talking about the Middle East, and of course, this is a place where, as I said, all kinds of things happen and nothing is ever quite as it seems. But to repeat again, I cannot see any logic in Iran wanting to attack the Persian Gulf states. I mean, it would forfeit Iran some degree of international sympathy. You're absolutely right, by the way, when you say that in strict, abstract, moral, and legal terms, they would be perfectly in their right to do it, after all of these countries ganged up against Iran and attacked it.

But the world doesn't function on abstract legal terms, at least not in that kind of way. The Chinese and the Russians would not like it. They would not want to see the Iranians act in that way. Other countries around the world would not like it too. It would, as I said, be a propaganda gift to the Israelis and to the hardliners in Washington. The Iranians are extremely sophisticated people. I think that is one thing we have seen very clearly over the last few weeks. I cannot imagine that they would make a mistake of that kind. I can't hear you. I'm sorry, I've lost you.

#Danny

Sorry, I was muted. I think it's an appropriate time now, given that Trump has said that he is very preoccupied with Iran. He might not even attend his own son's wedding to get into some of these other fronts, in particular the Ukraine front. You have been following, of course, the numerous attacks that Ukraine has conducted into Russian territory, which have now been complemented by this move by Donald Trump, which has a lot of, I think, even NATO—if we can separate the two, I don't—but if we look at NATO countries and Europe and how they've reacted to this, Donald Trump is saying he's sending 5,000 U.S. troops to Poland. He's saying because of the successful election of this new president, he's doing this. Of course, this is a big red flag for Russia, given that—who was it—was it Ushakov who basically said the spirit of Anchorage doesn't exist?

He never used those terms, calling it dead in the water. And then there are these nuclear and missile tests that have occurred in recent days, which are huge and have a lot of the Western mainstream media very panicked about them, with Belarus. They include nuclear munitions, but of course they include a lot of Russia's and Belarus's under the sharing agreements. They have the most advanced ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles, etc. This situation appears very bad in terms of how it's gone for the United States. It seems like actually things have escalated, and it's almost gone under the radar because the U.S. has been in active war with Iran for such a long period. But what's happening right now? Why is Trump sending 5,000 troops to Poland? Why is Russia conducting these drills right now?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, the first thing to say is you're absolutely right. This is not going well for the United States. The United States is not doing well in Iran. The Ukraine war, the whole Ukraine crisis, is going badly wrong too. And Donald Trump went to China and came back empty-handed, with a very, very strong warning about Taiwan from Xi Jinping ringing in his ears. So Donald Trump goes back to Washington. He's in a bad mood, which he clearly is, and he wants to reassert himself and show to all these people, to the Russians, to the Chinese, that the United States and he are still strong. So we get announcements like this one about the 5,000 troops to Poland. We have the threats against Cuba.

I think with this particular president, I have to say this, a lot of these decisions, a lot of these announcements are emotionally driven. The Europeans were completely taken by surprise by this 5,000-troop deployment to Poland announcement. So were the Poles, by the way, which is interesting. So, I mean, it makes it all look very much like, you know, it's flown off the pen or typewriter, if you like—Trump angry because nothing is going well. And he's at the moment very angry with the Russians, and I think more angry than people realize. The Russians, as you correctly say, have been conducting big nuclear drills. They have started to make more advances in the conflict on the front lines. Ushakov actually did exactly what he said—he's trashed the whole Anchorage agreement.

I mean, the point about the spirit of Anchorage is that that was a Russian formula. It was the Russians who were talking about this great spirit of Anchorage that they'd achieved. You know, that Trump and Putin got on so really well and they'd come to some kind of agreement and were always moving forward. And now here we have Putin's own foreign policy advisor basically saying that's all gone, never existed. It's all a fake. The Russians are now also saying that there's no point in continuing with the discussions with the Americans and the Ukrainians because they're not leading anywhere. They're not achieving anything. Rubio has now, by the way, joined in on that. He said the same thing. But again, it was the Russians who started to talk in this way.

And then I think the other thing that probably people are not getting is that on the 29th of April, Putin called Trump and told Trump in categorical terms, if there is any Ukrainian drone attack on Moscow during the Victory Parade on the 9th of May, we're going to hit back very hard against central Kyiv. And if any of your people are there and get killed, well, you've now got the warning. So Trump had to pull back from that too. And as I said, he's feeling frustrated and he's feeling angry in isolation. Perhaps that wouldn't be so bad, but he's had the debacle with Iran. And what happened in China, I think, hasn't helped either, because he didn't get from Xi Jinping the things he wanted. There's that expression, everything is connected. Absolutely so. The United States continues to push hard on every front. Its problem is it's losing in every one.

#Danny

And all of this has come in the backdrop, too, of, you know, the Trump administration being very careful not to even mention Ukraine very much in terms of the war. But everyone else is, of course, you know, the Kagans of the world, Victoria Nuland's Institute for the Study of War, that mouthpiece of the neocons. They feed every single day to the Western mainstream media that Ukraine is on the up and up, that they're gaining on the battlefield, that these attacks in Russian territory show Russia's weakness, and it seems to continue in this direction of narrative management.

What's actually the reality, though? Because Vladimir Putin and Russia, they don't seem very fazed. I mean, Russia... it hosted Xi Jinping, Putin. I mean, I know Putin went to Beijing—sorry about that reversal—and inked a bunch of deals. There hasn't been any... it doesn't seem like there's any panic in Russia, any side of the Russian government. But yet we hear these stories about Ukraine's resilience and how it's coming back from the doldrums. What's happening?

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, I mean, the reality of the war is that there's always ebb and flow, especially in this war. It's a different war from the one that Americans, I think, are used to. So what happens is you have, usually in the summer, a period of very, very intense military activity that lasts until the autumn, when you see movements on the front lines and towns fall and positions captured. And then you have a period from autumn, roughly the end of the year, until the spring, when both sides stop and catch their breath. It's a time of cold and then of mud because, you know, all the snow thaws and the ground turns muddy, and the armies have to reorganize and refit, and they have to introduce more men.

And then sometime around mid-spring, things begin to start up again. We are in that position. We're in the situation at the moment when things are starting up again. And the Ukrainians have been conducting their drone attacks on Russia, which have done damage, but nowhere near as much damage as some people in the commentaries might lead you to think. And the Russians, for their part, have been advancing and have once again been making real inroads on the battlefield. Now, that is the last thing you're going to see ever acknowledged, because most of the commentators in the West take their reports about what's happening on the front lines from the Ukrainians.

The Ukrainians are very slow to acknowledge when positions are lost. They continue to claim, for example, that they retain control of part of Pokrovsk, which nobody who follows the war closely believes to be so. So they don't want to admit that the Russians are now once again on the attack and gaining ground. And of course, the Kagans and the Nulands don't want to admit it either, because losing one war against Iran is bad enough; losing another one against the Russians, especially in Europe, is worse still.

#Danny

And how significant was this flurry of major visits that happened in China? Because Donald Trump, he visited China. Afterward, he was singing—I mean, the whole trip he was singing—the praises of Xi Jinping. It looked like the United States was attempting to attract China with honey rather than vinegar and came out with very little, if anything, other than verbal understandings. And then Xi Jinping hosted Vladimir Putin; they came out with 40-plus agreements inked and signed. And then I think Xi Jinping is going to be meeting with the DPRK, North Korea, very soon, and this doesn't feel unintentional.

One thing that Trump definitely didn't get from China was anything on Iran. That was initially what everyone was saying in the administration—they're going to pressure China on Iran. That was dropped very quickly. That was almost dropped before the plane landed. But what's the significance of these visits? What does it signify? Because it felt very impactful, but they came and went really fast, and not a lot of people are talking about it.

#Alexander Mercouris

Well, what it means at the minimum is that China is now the global center of diplomacy, which is an astonishing fact and one that is unprecedented in modern history for a non-Western country to be where all the top people go. I mean, that's the first time that's happened that anybody can remember. But the Americans go there, the Russians go there—everybody wants to talk and speak to the Chinese leader and the Chinese leadership. So that in itself is a momentous change in international relations. Now, the Trump visit to China and the Putin visit to China were completely different. The Putin visit is part of a regular scheduled sequence of visits that take place every year now between the Chinese and the Russians.

So usually Putin will go roughly about twice a year to China. Xi Jinping might go to Russia once a year, but there will be these big, elaborate, worked-out agreements that are being discussed and negotiated all the time. This is part of a continuous process of development of what is now a very important and very strong relationship. The Trump visit was completely different. That was an impromptu decision by Trump after his meeting with Xi Jinping in South Korea in October to have a visit, to go to China. He's apparently been trying to get the Chinese to agree to a visit basically since he was inaugurated. Then he was supposed to go in March, but he had to call it off.

Then, unlike the Russian visit, there was very little preparation. But he went there anyway. He brought all of these business people with him. It lasted two days. Very, very little actual business was done. And Trump went in with all kinds of expectations that there would be some kind of agreements about something. And the Chinese, in fact, gave him very little, except this very strong warning about Taiwan. And because the Chinese know how to conduct diplomacy, they gave the warning, which is the strongest I've heard from a Chinese leader to an American president, by the way. In person, too. In person.

#Danny

Across the table.

#Alexander Mercouris

Across the table, with the whole American delegation there. But the Chinese, as they always do, because they're, you know, consummate diplomats, they sugared the pill. They had him at a banquet in the Great Hall of the People. They took him to the Temple of Heaven. They gave him a tour around Zhongnanhai. But as I said, none of that ultimately made any difference to the substance of what happened.

#Danny

Yeah, and for those who may not know, that is nothing off China's back. This is how China operates anyway. So it really was just China going through their general diplomatic protocol, which is very generous anyway if there's a leader of— and they view most leaders as significant. So most leaders actually receive very, very good treatment, the ones who are allowed to come and who are invited to come. So for this to have happened, it was almost as if the United States was just going through the motions. As you said, it's very historically unprecedented for China to be the one to host and kind of hold those diplomatic cards, in contrast with Russia and then with Putin's visit.

Yeah. The bigger picture, Alexander, too, is it does feel like we're entering a moment where – I mean, we talked about Iran earlier. Now we're talking about China and we're talking about Russia. It does feel like these three countries are increasingly in a position where, if anything the second Trump administration has taught us, it's that these three countries are now finding so much strength that they are the ones to kind of dictate terms and how things happen when it comes to matters important to them. And I think that's a very different position for the United States to be in.

#Alexander Mercouris

It is an unprecedented position for the United States to be in. I mean, I made a point in a post I published on X that the Chinese readout of Xi Jinping's message to Trump was that the United States must be careful, must be careful, must do something. People do not, in American experience, talk like that to the United States—use the word "must," demand that the United States act in a certain way. For the Americans, that is unprecedented. And yes, of course, you're absolutely right. It's three countries: China, Russia, Iran. Russia has withstood the sanctions blow, the massive sanctions blow that the Americans inflicted on it in 2022. It's prevailing on the battlefields.

Iran has absorbed this enormous American attack and is prevailing in the Strait of Hormuz. But of course, the key player, the most important country here, is China. China is now the economic colossus, the manufacturing giant. It's moving forward in areas of technology. It has tremendous statecraft behind it, which anybody who has any knowledge of China and its history would find unsurprising. And when we talk about a movement towards a multipolar system, it is the rise of

China that is the reason why this is happening. It is ultimately because there is China there. That is what makes it so much more difficult for the United States to prevail against Iran, against Russia, in all sorts of other places.

#Danny

And in this case with the United States vs. China, while much of the policies and the aggressive posture of the U.S. vs. China haven't really changed—in fact, I don't know if you saw the reports, but there are now rumblings out of Congress and the Foreign Services Committee, etc.—they're saying that the reason why the United States hasn't approved the latest Taiwan arms package is not because of anything Donald Trump does or doesn't want to do. It's because actually the U.S. doesn't have the munitions to send to Taiwan anyway, which isn't actually new. A lot of the arms packages that the U.S. signs off on are completely backlogged in the tens of billions of dollars' worth because they don't actually exist. But now there is an admission that Operation Epic Fury, the Iran war, the aggression against Iran, has depleted them so much that they're not even willing to sign and pass them through.

But I think this just underscores that while the policies may not change, we do see that the Trump administration is increasingly hesitant to make China, and aggression towards China in the political sphere, a priority. Even Joe Biden, as completely braindead as he might have been by 2023, was not shy to call Xi Jinping a dictator during the press conference of the APEC summit, which had, in 2023, Xi Jinping in attendance at that time. That was a massive sign of disrespect, but one that the administration fully embraced, even if Antony Blinken had a cringe moment and tried to look away. But nonetheless, that's been the posture. But Trump looked completely different, and his administration looked completely different during this meeting. And I think that said a lot—oh, such a huge amount.

#Alexander Mercouris

I mean, Biden also insulted Xi Jinping in an address to Congress, in one of the State of the Union addresses, which is, to me, even more astonishing. Trump himself has not in the past been shy about being very rude and aggressive about China. And now the president of the United States goes to China, flatters Xi Jinping, calls him a great leader and all that, but comes back empty-handed. It is an extraordinary study in contrasts and a clear demonstration of the change in relative power. And of course, I mean, the United States—I mean, if the United States said we're not supplying arms to Taiwan because we don't want to get embroiled in a conflict with China—well, that is a strong policy position.

But for the United States to come along and say, well, we're not going to supply arms to Taiwan because we don't have them, I think that is an incredible confession of weakness, actually. But that, again, is where the United States is. And we've already seen that play out during the Ukraine war. In no war that the United States has ever fought up to now has it run out of weapons. That has never

happened, but now it has. It began to run short of weapons in Ukraine, back in Ukraine's 2023 offensive, and they basically stopped supplying weapons on a major scale to Ukraine now. They've run out of weapons against Iran, which is in some ways even more humiliating. And of course, coming up against China when you have depleted arsenals is extraordinary.

#Danny

Yeah, it is extraordinary. And here's the actual report. So, more accurately, this was the acting Secretary of the Navy, Hondo Geurts, who said to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee that right now we're doing a pause in order to make sure we have enough munitions that we need for Epic Fury. So, directly connecting this arms package that has been China's, of course, ire. They've said, don't do this, this is a big mistake, it'll only worsen relations. Trump has not made any decision on it, the Trump administration. But now we're seeing the truth about why there's the delay.

You know, in the last few minutes, we have five or ten minutes, Alexander. I wanted to ask your opinion on this. A lot of people, because of what's happened with Iran and all the things we just talked about, there's been a lot of concern about BRICS, for example, given that—especially the war in Iran—but we could also say what's happened in general in the world. We've seen a move of a lot of new countries into BRICS, like the UAE and the Saudis playing the fence, but the UAE in particular, and India, playing a kind of harsh double-dealing game, which could weaken BRICS in the short and long term.

But now that we've kind of talked, the outline, too, seems that maybe it was always the case that Russia, China, and now Iran were going to be moving toward the multipolar world a lot faster than these other countries. And I'm wondering if you see any reasons to be optimistic then about these mechanisms like BRICS growing to some extent anyway because of just what's happening on the ground, in the reality situation, regardless of the political. I think a lot of people are always concerned about the political imaginations of members, as it remains a consensus organization with, I guess, a far cry from actual consensus existing within it.

#Alexander Mercouris

You see, I have always had a slightly different take on the BRICS than others. I mean, I wrote a piece way back in 2015, you know, more than 10 years ago, in which I said that the central relationship, the core relationship, is between China and Russia. These are the two great powers who are at the center of this system. They don't want to call their relationship an alliance because they don't want to make commitments to each other that might come back to hurt them. And at the same time, they don't want to seem visibly like allies, because an alliance defines itself as having enemies, and they don't want everybody—you know, India, which perhaps has issues with China, or other countries that might have issues with Russia—they don't want those countries to be scared off by the fact that, you know, there is this Russian-Chinese alliance overtly opening.

So the Chinese and the Russians, what they've done is they've worked consistently. This is an analysis I made in 2015, which I hold to. They worked consistently to deepen and strengthen their relationship. And in order to cloak what is going on, they've woven a whole network, a whole tapestry of other organizations and institutions around it. So BRICS, obviously, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the CSTO, et cetera. But one of their basic reasons is to sort of divert attention away from the fact that the core relationship is between the Chinese and the Russians. Now, having said that, we are not in exactly the same world that we were in in 2015. And I think over time, BRICS has developed a greater reality about it than it did at that time.

And I think that nonetheless, it still retains some of that amorphous quality that I talked about in that article I wrote in 2015, which is useful for all the various members, because it means that they can disagree about some things and they can move forward with others. And they're not kept back in those things they want to move forward on by their disagreements on any specific issue. Their major priority at the moment is to work out their financing systems, to find ways around the dollar. And the Chinese and the Russians are clearly talking about that. One of the people who went with Putin to China was the chairwoman of the Russian Central Bank, for example. I mean, that's why she was there. And the Indians are also very active in all of this.

Coordinating financing systems is a very complicated business, and you have to come up with all sorts of ways that are going to work. And here we come back to the point about the Persian Gulf states, because I said they've all got their currencies pegged to the dollar. That gives the United States great leverage and influence over them. But of course, now that they are perhaps becoming concerned about the United States, it gives them more motivation to work through these arrangements. And that might even include a country like the UAE. So you can see that, in a way, BRICS being what it is actually plays to its strengths. And people should not misunderstand its seeming weaknesses. BRICS is not NATO. It is not the European Union. It is not the G7. It is not any one of these things.

#Danny

I think that's a really, really good point, especially in light of the fact that, I mean, how much more clear does, especially China and Russia—and I 100% agree with you that they are the focal point given their size, economically, their importance, where they sit on the globe, all kinds of reasons. But both of them are so clear about how they operate on the international stage that it was always seemingly going to be the case that the development of their relationship and, of course, how that strengthens them—it was really all about not just their own needs for development, but also that if they are stronger, if they are developing faster, then they become more attractive by default as partners and as global, you know, as global players on all fronts. And that's exactly what's happened.

And so I could very well see a scenario where China, Russia, and now Iran, and whichever other country decides to hop on board, move in that kind of direction where they get stronger. Therefore,

more countries—I mean, Made in Saudi Arabia 2020, whatever it is, 2020-whatever—there's an office in Shanghai dedicated to them. They have hedged to a huge degree and bet a lot on China. So, yeah, I think that's the movement in the world. And the more that the U.S. becomes chaotic and crisis-ridden and facilitates all kinds of instability, economically and otherwise, I think that's only going to become more so the case. And therefore, the big watch that we are—I guess our eyes must be peeled on how the U.S. reacts to this and, of course, how Europe and whoever hangs on to the United States reacts to it. But any final thoughts? Well, that was perfectly said.

#Alexander Mercouris

I completely agree with that. I think that is exactly right. I think 2026, by the way, could very well turn out to be a really important year. I mean, we've had, and we're going to have, events develop in Ukraine as well—of that I am sure. By the way, we could very well have a major economic situation in Europe, perhaps also in the United States by year-end too. We have very great political fragilities in Europe, in Germany, in England, in Britain, in all sorts of places, and the United States doesn't have a coherent plan for this. It's hitting out in every direction.

It's now going to sort of go against Cuba, which is small and little and vulnerable because it can't really prevail in Ukraine or in Iran or against China or in Taiwan or those sorts of places. But going against Cuba doesn't resolve any of America's problems. It just makes the U.S. look even more like the bully and rogue elephant that you basically were saying it was. So this is an important moment—a situation where the United States admits it's running out of weapons, a situation where the United States is unable to prevail in a war even against a second-tier power like Iran, a situation where its technological leadership is being challenged like it's never been. Well, this is a very important year indeed.

#Danny

All very well said, Alexander. It's great to be with you. I want to make sure everyone knows that your YouTube channel is in the video description so they can check that out, as well as The Duran's YouTube channel. So everyone should be—if you're not, I'm sure a lot of audience members already are—but if you're not, do subscribe, do check out all of Alexander's work. Hit the like button before you go. Thanks to everyone who gave a super chat. I put you up on the screen. Moderators, all who viewed, hit the like button before you go. That boosts the show. It's Memorial Day weekend. I won't be streaming, but I will have some original clips up as well for the weekend. But Alexander, anything you want to say before I hit the end stream button?

#Alexander Mercouris

Absolutely a joy to be here on this program, Danny, and I look forward, if you don't mind, to another invitation soon.

#Danny

Oh, of course. Definitely soon, everyone. Okay, thanks for joining in, and I'll see you again soon. Bye bye.