

Larry Johnson: Persian Gulf States Pivot: US Out, China/Russia In?

See Full Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/live/qShS2y0N9Ys?si=mrAytN9iv7mXdkmy> Follow me: Substack: https://substack.com/@dialogueworks?utm_campaign=profile&utm_medium=profile-page X (Twitter): https://x.com/Dialogue_NRA Patreon: https://patreon.com/Dialogueworks?utm_medium=unknown&utm_source=join_link&utm_campaign=creatorshare_creator&utm_content=

#Nima

The latest news is that the Iranian delegation — the head of the parliament, together with the head of the Central Bank of Iran and the foreign minister of Iran — are in Qatar. It's about the Iranian frozen assets. What do we know? And Donald Trump had a long, long post on his Truth Social. I don't know, he was telling us a huge story about how amazing the deal is, and that he's making the deal. Some countries are not happy with that. Some countries are part of this. And one of the amazing things that he mentioned is that Iran is going to be part of the Abraham Accords. This is what is happening here. The guy is just losing everything. What is your understanding of the current situation between Iran and the United States? We're going to talk about other issues, but when it comes to the deal, when it comes to the negotiations between Iran and the United States, what's going on?

#Larry

Well, Iran is engaged in the negotiations. It's the United States that's negotiating against itself. That's the problem, because you've got this Zionist lobby that's just going crazy. When word of this leaked out on Saturday, and I wrote about it last night, across the board the reaction was extremely negative. So Trump faces an uphill slog there. Then the Israeli cabinet's not at all cooperative. They're not going, "Oh, great, this is good news." So they're opposed to it. You know, I just think Trump's buying time until Eid is over, and then he's going to attack again. You know, it's insane. But, you know, they keep the way that different terms are presented in the press, that one minute it appears that Iran's going to have to wait to get sanctions relief, and then on the other hand, the sanctions relief is imminent.

The assets are going to be frozen or unfrozen? No, they're going to stay frozen. Yves Smith pointed something out to me that I had neglected to consider, and I think she's exactly right. Trump does not unilaterally have the means to lift all sanctions because some of those sanctions have been imposed by acts of Congress. So Trump can't just say, oh, well, screw it, I'm not going to follow that. I mean, he's going to have to get Congress to lift those sanctions. So this process is a lot more complicated than it would appear. What is certain is Iran at least knows what it wants, and Iran is

going to stick to those fundamental positions. It's going to insist upon sanction relief and the return of the frozen assets.

And if—to the extent that Doha—I didn't realize Doha might have been involved with it on the sanctions, you know, freezing assets—the other place you'd have to go would be into Dubai, to the United Arab Emirates. I'm sure they've got a substantial amount of Iranian assets potentially frozen. So, you know, I think this is just the lull, unfortunately. I don't see... there's not the political momentum in the United States to say, let's stop the war, let's find a solution. It's still that basically Iran's going to have to do whatever the hell we tell them, or else. That's still the attitude. So until that attitude changes, I don't see any fundamental change going forward with, you know, particularly these countries signing on to the Abraham Accords. Not going to happen. The Israelis have proven to be too brutal.

And, you know, right now in Israel, they're fighting amongst themselves. You know, just overnight, Ben-Gvir is insisting that they've got to start blowing up every building in Lebanon. And, you know, when Bibi Netanyahu thinks that's too extreme, that tells you how crazy things are. You know, Netanyahu reportedly pushed back and said, you know, we're not going to do that. Good God, where did he finally, you know, find a conscience? So this is, yeah, it's disarray. You know, it's more market manipulation. The markets that are open—they're not open in the States today because it's a holiday, Memorial Day—but the other commodity markets around the world that are open, this drove down the price of oil. All peace is at hand? It's not at hand. But, you know, this whole charade surrounding market manipulation is sure making somebody a lot of money.

#Nima

And it seems that the frozen assets in Qatar are something like \$11 billion, and they're there to talk about this. Larry, do you think that it seems the Qatari delegation, the night before last, went to Iran to talk with the Iranians? Was it part of this negotiation on Iranian frozen assets, or was it something beyond that?

#Larry

No, I think it's something beyond that. So Pakistan is working furiously behind the scenes to construct sort of the lead for China and for Russia, to construct a new security architecture in the Persian Gulf. You know, what I'm told is that both Qatar and Saudi Arabia are just basically sick and tired of the United States. They think being in this relationship with the United States has created more risk for them, more cost. So they'd just as soon get out from under that. And so those discussions are underway in terms of who's going to do what, how the security of these various countries will be guaranteed, and it gets into economic security as well. So there's a lot that's going on. The good news is they're talking—the fact that this senior Iranian delegation went to Qatar to talk to the leaders there.

Because Qatar, of all the countries in the Persian Gulf, I think Qatar has suffered the most physical damage to its economic infrastructure, much more than Saudi Arabia, because some of the aluminum plants and the facilities for liquefied natural gas, those have been severely damaged, and it's not a matter of months of repairs. It's potentially years of repairs ahead of them just to get back online. So clearly, they're suffering a cash loss right now. So this, you know, ignore—I guess I'd say ignore what Donald Trump is saying because he's all over the board and does not yet have a clear plan. One minute he wants to blow up Iran, and the next minute he says he wants them to sign up with the Abraham Accords.

#Nima

The thing that you mentioned about Smotrich—he's talking about how you have to bring down 10 buildings in Dahia, for example, in Beirut, in response to every drone. Here's the question: what are these drones doing to Israel that they're so desperate when it comes to these drones? Ten buildings in response to one drone? What is that?

#Larry

Well, the drones of Hezbollah are destroying tanks, armored vehicles, and killing soldiers in large numbers. You know, Israel is suffering more casualties in this war with Hezbollah than it did in 2006—I think substantially more. And in terms of loss of vehicles and such, I think it exceeds what they lost in the fighting in Gaza. Israel keeps a very close hold on the casualty figures, but I'd be willing to say that, in fact, I think Israel has sustained more casualties in this last six months of fighting with Hezbollah than they did in the previous three years in Gaza.

#Nima

Here is what the spokesperson of the Iranian Foreign Ministry said: there are no tolls and there will be no tolls in the Strait of Hormuz, but ships have to pay an environmental protection fee in a joint system.

#Larry

It's a word game. You have to call it tolls. It's not tolls; it's just a usage fee. You know, it's like if you go to Las Vegas now, you have to pay a resort fee. It's an extra tax, but they call it a resort fee.

#Nima

Yeah. By the way, the Chinese use that. You remember before Donald Trump, you know, the meeting between Donald Trump and Xi, they used that term. It's an environmental sort of fee that we're paying to Iran. Larry, Donald Trump, it seems that he's putting pressure on GCC countries to normalize their relationship with Israel. I don't know if that is achievable at this particular time

because, you know, the war is not over, in my opinion. And we may have some new escalations in the region. And he's putting pressure: if you want to have a deal between Iran and the United States, you have to improve or normalize your relationship with Israel. How is that going to help Israel? How is that going to work? I don't see that happening because we know their position even before this war started. They said without a Palestinian state, there would be no improvement in the relationship they have with Israel, if any, at this particular moment.

#Larry

Well, yesterday—or it was the day before yesterday—when Trump had that phone call with all the Gulf Arabs and Turkey and Egypt and brought up the whole issue of, “Hey, so we'll sign on to the Abraham Accords, right?” there were crickets. Nobody said a word. It's like, okay, don't tell him to bug off, he'll go into a rage, just say nothing. He said, “Oh, that's interesting.” So yeah, it's not going to happen. The time for the Abraham Accords has come and gone, and with the slaughter of—well, it was probably more than 100,000 Palestinian men, women, and children, easily—I don't see any of the governments in the Gulf, with maybe the exception of the United Arab Emirates, having the stomach to do that.

#Nima

No. If you were to mention, Larry, the difficulties we're facing right now, is that putting an end to the war on all fronts? Is that going to be the Strait or foremost? Is that going to be the Iranian nuclear program? Because this morning we learned from the Iranian foreign ministry that the focus right now is on ending the war on each and every front, which we know is impossible with the Israeli government, with Benjamin Netanyahu, with what they're doing, as we talked about. They're bombing Lebanon. They're bombing Gaza. They're hitting people in the West Bank.

#Larry

Yeah, no, look, that I think has been one of the, let's call it, inflexible Iranian demands. It's not just a matter of, okay, you're going to stop attacking us, you're going to stop attacking Lebanon, you're going to stop attacking the Palestinian people. And the United States is in a position to stop that. We pull the plug completely on Israel. But politically, that's not going to happen. Trump's not going to do that. So that means the war against the Palestinians and the Lebanese, that is going to continue. Israel may scale it back a little bit, but remember Trump's boast that he controls Netanyahu and he tells them to stop bombing in Lebanon. By God, they'll stop bombing in Lebanon. And what's Israel been doing ever since? They've been bombing every day in Lebanon.

So, you know, unless Trump actually gets serious and orders the Department of War, Department of State, cut the aid, pull it back, withdraw forces, withdraw advisors, then that might get Israel's attention, and the United States could force an agreement. If the fighting stopped and the Israelis basically were willing to recognize a Palestinian state, yeah, then I think an Abraham Accord is

possible. But that's not going to happen. Israel is the Zionists who are talking about, you know, they're still talking about how they'd like to provoke a new round of fighting with Iran and then take advantage of that to blow up the Al-Aqsa Mosque and blame it on Iran, hoping that that would provoke a war between Iran and the rest of the Arab Muslim world, and then free the way so that Israel can go build the Third Temple.

I mean, this entire thing is just so ridiculous. I don't know how familiar you are with the Torah, the Old Testament as Christians call it. But when the children of Israel escaped Egypt, they were warned, don't make any graven images. Don't make something physical that you worship physically. That was the command. And then when Moses goes up to get the Ten Commandments and comes down, they had made a golden calf, and they were worshiping the golden calf, and he broke what had been sort of version one of the commandments and went up to get version two.

My point in all of this is that when you get into the book of Deuteronomy, it's about, okay, you're going to build this temple, and it's going to have this kind of silk and all this gold, and you're going to have this ungilded. I mean, it's detailed about building a graven image. That's why I said I would tell the Jews and the Christians, your God is pretty damn confused. Because on the one hand, he claims, don't make any graven images. Then he spends an entire chapter like an architectural digest—hey, build this and garnish this and carry this Ark of the Covenant around. So it's like all graven image. And what's so sad about this is people still believe this crap, and based upon that, are willing to kill other human beings in pursuit of this graven image, which their God supposedly told them never to build.

Sorry, it's just stuff like that drives me crazy. Because you'll get sane, rational people, educated people, saying, oh, the temple, you know, we're going to bring among the religious Jews. They'll be like, oh yeah, get the temple, man, the Messiah comes. And the Christians say, yeah, you already killed him once, you want him to come back? You know, so that's where we get into all this eschatological belief. And the Muslims have theirs. You know, I just, I wish—my only feeling with respect to religion is, if you believe that God is the creator of all life, then respect that everybody that's around you is also part of God's creation. Treat them as such. Okay? Stop killing each other, starving each other, persecuting each other. That's enough. Sorry. That's your religious lesson for today.

#Nima

Larry, Donald Trump said in his latest post, he says maybe one or two countries don't want to have this deal between the United States and Iran. Who are those countries he's talking about? Israel and UAE, basically? Um, no, actually I think he's talking more about Iran, um, and um...

#Larry

I'm not sure who else would. Take your pick—Qatar, Saudis. I think the Saudis are still willing to cut a deal with Israel.

#Nima

They've never been a principled lot, in terms of watching them over the years.

#Larry

Wow. Again, Trump is indulging a fantasy because the ingredients for an agreement are there, but it's going to require the United States to accept some concessions that the Zionist crowd will not tolerate. So I don't see how he bridges that gap. I don't see him being strong enough to tell them, "Oh, shut up, I'm ignoring you." I don't see him doing that.

#Nima

Yeah, I think Lindsey Graham said that. He posted that whatever is happening between Iran and the United States, the outcome is disastrous for Israel. But there's no way to change the reality for Israel.

#Larry

Right.

#Nima

How can Donald Trump change it? There is no way. What is that? So what would be the solution in the minds of people like Lindsey Graham?

#Larry

Well, and that's the other element to this. People think this is just Bibi. The problem is Bibi Netanyahu. If we just get rid of Bibi, boy, everything would be great. You get rid of Bibi, you've still got the Zionist problem. And the extremists that are represented by the likes of Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, they unfortunately are a very strong minority. But when you tie them together with other elements of Likud, the conservatives, they still are the majority voice in Israel. So it's not that you're moving away from extremism. You've got the extremism as dominant. So like I said, Bibi goes away, the policies aren't going to change dramatically.

The problem Israel has right now is its own limitations on its military power. Despite its claim that they're the strongest, the best in the region, I think the total manpower, if they called up all the reservists, would be 300,000, 400,000. I think right now they're getting by with keeping 90,000 active, and that's stretching them. And in tandem with that, we're seeing a rise in suicide. So you've

got not just traumatic brain injury, but this murdering of civilians and children is taking a toll. There are still many Israeli soldiers that do have a conscience, that do have a good sense of right and wrong.

And they're haunted by these images of what they're doing to these people. Now, there are some within the Israeli ranks that are completely inhuman. They don't care. They'll rape and murder because they enjoy it. You know, I just saw that there was a U.S. citizen who had gone over to fight, and he just came back and committed suicide as soon as he got back stateside. So, you know, look, this is consistent with what happened to the German Wehrmacht, the German army, when they invaded Poland and then proceeded into Ukraine and began engaging in these mass executions of Jews along the way.

One of the pressures that led to the development of, if you will, gas chambers and other ways to do mass extermination was because these soldiers were having mental breakdowns. The regular army was being affected by it. You had to really have this army of fanatics that would engage in this kind of conduct. And so you're seeing the same kind of phenomenon now among the Israeli Defense Force. So this is, you know, trying to fight a war in Gaza, a war in the West Bank. They haven't called it a war, but that's what it is. And then a war in southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah's capabilities have been dramatically enhanced, and the use of these first FPV drones is causing significant damage.