New Order: Unexpected Big 3 Agreement Revealed

Pascal examines the unexpected joint declaration issued by Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping after their Shenzhen summit. He discusses its four commitments: United Nations reform, energy supplies, international criminal jurisdiction and nuclear risk reduction. Connecting the agreement to Iran, European security and shifting great power relationships, he explores both its contradictions and its diplomatic potential. The commentary distinguishes political promises from binding treaties and considers why renewed dialogue offers cautious hope despite continuing conflicts and profound disagreements. Pascal's Links: Declaration toward Peace (White House): https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2026/11/u-s-russia-china-heads-of-state-declaration-toward-peace/ Official summit photographs and readout (China MFA): https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/zyxw/202611/t20261119_12063266.html Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: https://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2015/text.shtml Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: https://pascallottaz.substack.com Support Neutrality Studies: https://neutralitystudies.com/donate Neutrality Studies shop: https://neutralitystudies.com/shop Time Stamps 00:00 The unexpected summit declaration 01:43 Four points of agreement 03:56 Oil, Iran and competing interests 10:05 The ICC and great-power accountability 20:28 UN reform and the Security Council 25:39 Europe and the shifting balance of power 32:40 The promises of nuclear non-proliferation 36:53 Nuclear risks, Iran and cautious hope

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It is Thursday, November 19th, late in the evening over here in Asia. And what we've seen over the last couple of hours is that the APEC summit is underway. It's not quite concluded, as far as I can see, but we've had the big meetings. We've had Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, and Xi Jinping meeting with each other. We've had bilateral meetings between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, and also Xi Jinping and Donald Trump. We've had their photos taken, and this was quite a show. But the one thing that surprised me the most, and that I want to talk about, also in connection with what that might mean for Iran, is the joint declaration that these three leaders just concluded.

So a joint declaration, overall, is just an agreement between the three heads of state on what kind of messaging they want to get out. And the fact that we have that now between them surprised me, because I didn't think that it would be possible to actually come up with something that all three of them could put their names on. And usually these kinds of things take negotiations. A joint declaration is, of course, not the same as a treaty. A treaty involves a much more formal process, and it would then also go to the different parliaments to be ratified.

So it's not that kind of level of agreement, but it is something that all three delegations and all three leaders are willing to put their names on. And let me read to you what Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump came up with. It literally reads as follows: "Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, and Donald J. Trump of the United States of America met in Shenzhen on November 19, 2026. The Russian and U.S. heads of state expressed appreciation to China for hosting this historic trilateral summit."

"The three heads of state had an in-depth exchange of views on the current international situation and committed to maintaining strategic stability and international security. As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, China, Russia, and the United States committed to reforming the UN so that it can respond more effectively to global challenges and fulfill its fundamental mission of maintaining international peace and security." And this is the first of four clauses. So the first thing that they agree upon is that the United Nations needs to change in one way or another and that they are willing to do this. Now, there are three more clauses covering what they agree on. The second clause is...

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So I am pretty certain that this is something that was very dear to Donald Trump's heart, but that neither of the others opposes. And we'll talk about this in a second. But let's first read the third and fourth points that they agree upon. Third, the three heads of state recognized that the principle of state consent and respect for the immunity of state officials are of paramount importance and concurred that the International Criminal Court and other similar bodies must not abuse their jurisdiction. There's much to say about this as well in just a second, but first, the fourth point that they agree upon: the three heads of state reaffirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

The three countries will conduct a dialogue on reducing nuclear risks and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. So, four points that they agree upon. One of them is certainly something that Donald Trump wanted very much, which is this talk about a free flow of petroleum, something to stabilize the economy. This is, fairly and squarely, nothing else but Donald Trump saying that, you know, we basically need a way to reduce the price of oil on the world markets because of the war that he started in Iran. As you all know, the Strait of Hormuz is, to all intents and purposes, still closed.

We have had all of these pictures recently of oil tankers, even supertankers, catching fire after hitting mines or being targeted by the Iranians. We now know that the insurance costs for these supertankers have gone through the roof, into the tens of millions of US dollars—50 to 60 million US dollars per tanker, depending on the size—to insure them for passage through the Strait of Hormuz. And all of this is putting tremendous strain on petroleum reserves. Now, why do the other two agree to actually make this a strategic issue that they would put their signatures under? Well, on the one

hand, the Russians have never made a secret of the fact that they are willing to trade with the Americans.

And they just concluded a petroleum deal with the United States, saying that they are willing, more than willing, to actually export oil to the US. And there's even talk about the Russians selling gas to the Americans so that the Americans could resell that gas to Europe through the one remaining Nord Stream pipeline. So Vladimir Putin is not at all against trying to somehow give Donald Trump an off-ramp from his war with Iran, especially when it comes to somehow managing the markets. On the other hand, the Chinese are very much interested in stable oil markets because their prosperity also depends very much on the free flow of energy. Much of their energy needs are actually met through the Middle East, through West Asia.

And having some form of agreement in place that stabilizes the markets is something that Xi Jinping is certainly not opposed to. This might be strange, especially when you think in terms of the West against the rest and think of Russia and China as being in a strategic relationship together against the United States. But that's not what is actually going on. Russia and China do have every interest in somehow balancing the United States and its warmongering, and certainly they have an interest in supporting Iran. Yet there are competing interests within these states, including stable oil markets, growth, and energy markets that work. And if that can be achieved together with the United States, obviously now we have conclusive evidence that they are even willing to go along with the United States.

And I think this is really one of the outcomes of this big meeting: we can see that all three of them do agree that there is strategic competition between the United States and the other two, Russia and China, because Russia and China are really, at this point, very well integrated with each other. Although, I must say, not everything is as rosy as it looks, because if you look at the Power of Siberia pipeline, now renamed Power of Baikal, and how much time it took for them to negotiate this, you do understand that the Russians and the Chinese, too, are not naive about their relationship. They understand that what they are working on is very much also the outcome of long negotiations and not just blind trust. So we are not talking here about China and Russia against the United States.

We are looking at a world of competing superpowers with various interests, although Chinese and Russian interests right now align much more with each other. Even among them, there are reasons not to throw their entire weight behind one party or the other, but to have a relationship that is balanced to some extent. And we know from Vladimir Putin, we know from the Russians, that especially with the United States, they've been looking for a workable relationship. It doesn't need to be love. It doesn't need to be friendship. It doesn't even need to be an agreeable kind of relationship, but it needs to be some form of relationship.

That, of course, stands in stark contrast to how the Russians look at the Europeans at the moment: as those pesky little chihuahuas that try to obstruct any and all peace efforts. And we know from the

work of John Mearsheimer, and from people like Larry Johnson, who went to Russia and even met with the foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, that the Russians very much hold a grudge against the Europeans by now, and that they are far more willing and far more able to get through to the United States. So this makes evident sense. Hey guys, autumn spirit is here, and we've launched our new merch. For instance, the monster from our Kiel Symposium has arrived on T-shirts, tumblers, and magnets. The little fella is really cute. Check it out. Any purchase directly helps us keep the lights on.

So thanks a lot, and see you soon. Now, this brings me to point number two. The three heads of state recognize that the principle of state consent and respect for the immunities of state officials are of paramount importance. So this is the one that probably surprised me the most, but it also makes sense. Vladimir Putin, as you might know, has an ICC warrant out against him because, under Joe Biden, this is one of the things that the United States managed to get out of the ICC: an indictment of Vladimir Putin. And as you might recall, the collective West, for the longest time, has been celebrating this as a great achievement and as a way to brand Vladimir Putin as a war criminal who's at large and for whom an ICC warrant is out.

Now, all of that happened back in late 2022 or early 2023, when that came out. But then, of course, the 7th of October 2023 happened, with Hamas and Israel, and the entire genocide in Gaza got underway. And within a couple of months, the ICC had its back against the wall. Because they had issued this warrant against Vladimir Putin and one of his employees, they were then under very strong pressure, especially from Global South countries and African countries, to do something about this extreme form of violence. And they issued an arrest warrant against Benjamin Netanyahu and his second-in-command, Mr. Gallant. I think it was Gallant.

Yes, I think it was him. And that, on the other hand, enraged the collective West. It enraged everybody. The Biden administration was taken aback, and Democrats and Republicans alike called that out. And we all recall the now-deceased Lindsey Graham and how he called for the dismantlement of the International Criminal Court, really in shock at the audacity of an international court issuing arrest warrants against the "good side"—against the West, right? Against the leader of the West. That was, in their view, a huge transgression of the powers of this court.

And Donald Trump actually took that over and never gets tired of berating the International Criminal Court. And, of course, the United States already put sanctions on the ICC, right? They put sanctions on the court. They put sanctions on the judges. They put sanctions on the chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, and they tried to make their lives miserable. And actually, under Donald Trump, the United States is now using its state powers to try to dismantle the International Criminal Court, which was founded on the Rome Statute. Russia is not a party to it, the United States is not a party to it, and, to my knowledge, China is not a party to it either, although I would have to look that up.

So what we have here is a situation in which you have an arrest warrant against Vladimir Putin, you have an arrest warrant against Benjamin Netanyahu, one of Donald Trump's closest allies, and you have Xi Jinping. I should look that up again, just to make sure I don't tell you any kind of fake news,

but I think the Chinese also don't recognize it. And the Chinese, for the longest time, have had problems with these kinds of international criminal courts because the courts have a history of being used against Global South countries. Until recently, they hadn't had a single case open against Western leaders. They've had several cases against Africans.

They've had cases against Serbian leaders, individuals, but not against anyone that we would generally consider part of the collective West. Now, this has changed with Mr. Netanyahu. There's one more case, actually. There's one case where the ICC brought a case against U.S. Army soldiers and other U.S. service members for alleged crimes in Afghanistan. And that was already something that enraged the United States, because if there's one thing that the hegemon cannot accept, it is any kind of international institution that would try to go against the wishes of the hegemon.

And that was already a precedent that they hated and for which they imposed sanctions on certain individuals in the ICC. But now, with Mr. Netanyahu, they've applied even more pressure, and the United States has made it its declared goal under the Trump administration to dismantle the ICC. Mr. Rubio, the foreign secretary, of course, already declared that they will try to bring the full weight of the United States to bear against the ICC. And it's really quite an attack on international law itself. Now, I'm pretty sure it was the Trump administration that put that in there, because Vladimir Putin never cared much about that kind of ICC arrest warrant. Yes, it hurt.

Yes, it was negative news for him. But he already managed to visit Mongolia more than two years ago, a couple of months after the ICC arrest warrant came out. And Mongolia is a signatory to the Rome Statute. So if everything went according to the rules of the Rome Statute, then Mongolia would have had the obligation to arrest Mr. Putin. But naturally, that didn't happen. I mean, look at where Mongolia is, look at the number of people they have, look at the army that they have, and then just think about what it would mean if they did that.

And of course, the state visit happened, and Mr. Vladimir Putin was received with a red carpet, and there wasn't even any talk about the arrest warrant. But this was kind of Mr. Putin's way of asserting that, well, what can you do? You and what army, dear ICC? And the United States is kind of doubling down on that and is cracking down on the whole idea of international criminal investigations. And now they even managed to jointly put that into this declaration, something to which Mr. Xi and the Chinese obviously had no objection. This is, of course, pretty bad news for the idea of international law, for the idea of international criminal liability under the Rome Statute, under the Genocide Convention, and under all kinds of international court systems.

But I must say, it just reaffirms that we are, again, in a world of great powers, in a world in which the top states are free to do as they please, as long as they can avoid the wrath of the others. And here we've now got a joint agreement by the top three that they will not uphold the ICC or international criminal responsibility. What this means for international law remains to be seen. The

interesting thing about international law is, of course, that it doesn't necessarily move with the consent of just three great powers. The rest of the world very much has something to say about this. It means that, obviously, there will be no enforcement, right?

There will be no enforcement in China. There will be no enforcement in Russia. There will be no enforcement in the United States. But the actual principles of international law are still very much up for grabs. And the one thing that we know is that nothing lasts forever. Even a tripartite power distribution will change over time. And what happens to the ICC still remains to be seen. I am not completely without hope for these principles because, of course, at the same time, these states attach a great deal of value to, for instance, the Nuremberg trials and the Tokyo trials. Let's not forget: the United States, China, and Russia are all victors of the Second World War.

They were the ones that actually set up the Nuremberg trials and the Tokyo trials. And they will, for these historical reasons, hold on to the validity of what was decided back then and the importance of this kind of international criminal accountability. But now, 80 years later, they of course don't want that accountability to be applied to them, which also makes total sense. It's very dishonest, it's very hypocritical, but it makes perfect sense from the viewpoint of great power politics. Now, they managed to hammer this out in this declaration. Again, since the declaration is not a treaty, this doesn't actually have the force of international law, but it does indicate that we are headed, again, toward a world in which the powerful do as they please and the weak suffer as they must.

And it seems to me that the time for these kinds of international legal institutions is maybe not over, but we're definitely headed for a time when that consensus is weaker. Yet again, the ICC, as I said before, was mainly used against Global South states, and we have yet to see whether or not there is a future in this. So this is just to put this into some form of context that I think might be useful here. We then, of course, also have this commitment from the three powers that they want to reform the United Nations Security Council, that they want to reform the United Nations.

They don't actually mention the Security Council itself, although the Security Council, to me, is, of course, the most fundamental part of this because it's the most unfair part of the UN. You might recall that the UN has several main organs, but the two most important ones, I would say, are the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council, apart from the International Court of Justice. And the International Court of Justice is not the same thing as the International Criminal Court. The International Criminal Court is separate, and the International Court of Justice is the judiciary of the United Nations. That one only rules on state-to-state matters involving infringements of the rules of the UN Charter. But let's put that court aside for the moment. We have the United Nations General Assembly, and we have the United Nations Security Council.

The General Assembly is very much like a parliament: one country, one vote, and it can pass resolutions. However, these resolutions only have an advisory role. They are not binding, unfortunately. They are important, and they do create international law. They are significant, but they don't have binding force on all of the member states. The Security Council is basically the

executive branch, very much like a government, which can pass resolutions. And those resolutions have the force not only of law, but of the full United Nations Charter. And it's the only organ in the UN that can mandate military action—not interventions, but military action—in order to enforce the United Nations Charter.

The General Assembly and even the International Court of Justice cannot mandate military intervention. The only body that can do that in order to enforce the Charter is the Security Council. The Security Council is made up of, very importantly, the five permanent members and then 10 more non-permanent members that rotate on a two-year basis and do not have veto powers. The five permanent members are Russia, China, the United States, Britain, and France. And now what's interesting about what the big three of them decided here is, of course, that on the one hand, they say, "We are open to changes to the United Nations," but they don't even ask Britain and France. They don't even mention them.

So this is another one of these indicators of how times have changed since the Second World War, since 1945. Of course, France and Britain were still very relevant, or at least partially relevant, players, even if just because they were significantly involved in fighting the Second World War. France, of course, lost pretty quickly, but there was resistance, and there was the constant will to re-establish an order in Europe against the Nazis and the fascists. And the Brits, of course, were one of the two important powers on the continent to fight this war. The other one was, of course, the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union was the one that bled the most, by far. Twenty-seven million Soviet citizens perished in the Second World War, and the Red Army very much liberated the largest part of the European continent, all the way to Berlin.

Let's never forget that it was the Soviets who stormed Berlin and, in the end, were the ones who ended the German Nazi regime in Europe, and who were also very important in ending Italian fascism. But on the other hand, it was, of course, the Brits who also took quite a beating, and they lost large parts of their empire during that war. It's no coincidence that right after 1945, the UK was more or less forced to let go of its empire. But in return, they still got to be at the big boys' table. In the end, they also managed to get their own nuclear weapons. Let's not forget about that. The French and the Brits do have a nuclear deterrent, even if it's not a large one. But they did develop their own nuclear weapons. This is separate from the UN story, of course.

But in the UN, they got deterrence through their veto powers. Now, obviously, what we see in this agreement between Trump, Xi, and Putin is that this kind of world has ended as well. This is no longer a question of whether or not France is part of that club. That question has been more or less conclusively answered. Also, when we consider the way in which the Ukraine war is currently developing, the Russians are basically working only with the Americans and with their proxy, the Ukrainians, to try to negotiate something to end the bloodshed. But the Europeans are completely left out. On the one hand, the Europeans are utterly incapable of even naming a single negotiator or coming up with a single negotiating position and a single negotiating team.

On the other hand, they really don't matter at this point. The only thing the Europeans are doing—and the Russians keep emphasizing this—is sabotaging the entire process that the Russians and, to some extent, the United States are trying to pull off here. On the one hand, they are constantly supporting the hard line of the Ukrainians. On the other hand, they are trying to work in the United States through the enemies of any kind of peace process with Russia and, with all of their positions, undermine any kind of realistic settlement of the Ukraine conflict. Now, Vladimir Putin just recently also said in this respect that there needs to be some form of space for the Europeans in the post-war settlement.

And this also makes evident sense, because what Russia has been seeking for the last couple of weeks is a security architecture, a new security arrangement in Eurasia—not only in Europe, but in the entirety of Eurasia. And if you look at Eurasia, Europe is, as Glenn Diesen wrote in one of his beautiful books, nothing else but the western peninsula of the Eurasian continent. But it is still part of the Eurasian continent. So obviously, the Russians would want some form of understanding with the Europeans as well, because the one thing that Russia seeks is security and a lasting peace order on the entire continent, which now also includes Iran. It includes West Asia. It includes East Asia and Southeast Asia as well.

So in this sense, the APEC summit actually was quite important because it was in this Asian part of the Eurasian continent that the leaders met. It is the Asian part of this large landmass to which, it now seems, the balance of power has shifted. And it is really no surprise that the Europeans were not part of that, not only because they're geographically outside this region, but also because, in terms of great power politics, they're outside the region. The United States, in this sense, is much more part of the Asia-Pacific than the Europeans are. And while it is sad for Europe, it is probably the most realistic way forward. If the big three come to some form of agreement, if they get buy-in from other states, then, well, the Europeans will be left with no other choice but to somehow tag along.

And this declaration that Trump, Xi, and Putin would like to support a process to reform the United Nations—I view that as part of this. I view that as part of this attempt now to at least rhetorically say, "We are open to new ways forward within the largest multilateral framework that we have." And let me just emphasize this, because a couple of people here on YouTube keep talking about the end of the United Nations and saying that multilateralism and international law itself are doomed. I do not share that opinion, mainly because, for all that has happened and for all the weaknesses of the United Nations, the United Nations is built upon one thing, one thing that is very, very valuable, and that's the Charter. And none of the great powers, nor any of the medium or small powers, has ever said a bad word about the Charter itself.

The Charter, very much like the Constitution of the United States, is almost a sacred document. It has something almost holy about it because it is this one thing that everybody can agree has value in and of itself. And while you can criticize the United Nations as an institution, as an organization, as an administrative and bureaucratic body, and as a talk shop and whatnot, the UN Charter is

something that the Chinese, the Russians, the Americans, but also the French, the Brits, the Germans, the Turks—everybody basically agrees is a good document. And these are the principles. Now compare this institution, for instance, with the European Union. The European Union has no such founding document. The European Union has a couple of treaties.

The European Union has a couple of arrangements that they made, but they don't have a fundamental core document that spells out, in terms acceptable to all its members, what the basic requirements and ideals of the institution are. This is why I think the European Union has no future. It has no base. It has no anchor. Whereas something like the United States with its Constitution, or the United Nations with its Charter, very much has a future because you can go back to these principles and check whether the individual members are still okay with them. And as it stands today, in November 2026, none of the great powers and none of the other powers has ever said that they are in fundamental opposition to the Charter itself.

The problem we have is the organization and the political distribution of power. And now we have it in writing that these different members are actually willing to work on revamping the United Nations. I do not think that anything will come out of this. I do not think that this is more than a bit of hot air directed especially toward, you know, all of the other non-permanent members of the Security Council, to tell them, like, "Look, guys, just go along. I mean, we all know it's not perfect, but let's continue." But in this sense, it is something that is very easy for all three of them to say.

It's very similar, actually—and a little bit cynical—but similar to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the NPT. The NPT has at least two pillars. One is, of course, preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and it has more or less achieved that. I mean, we were at five nuclear-weapon states back in 1968 when it was signed. And by now, in 2026, we have nine nuclear-weapon states. We had a few that were added to the original five. We had Pakistan and India. We had North Korea, which broke out of the treaty. And then we have Israel, which has never actually admitted that it has nuclear weapons, but at this point, it's very much an open secret that they do.

So we are at nine nuclear-weapon states as of now. And yes, that part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty wasn't perfect. But, you know, you must imagine that back in 1958, when discussions started on the NPT, there were worries that within 20 or 30 years, we might get to 25, 30, or 40 nuclear-weapon states. So the fact that the number of nuclear-weapon states has stayed low is actually an achievement. Now, the other pillar of the NPT, though, is the intention of the nuclear-weapon states to denuclearize and to pursue arms control. And that, of course, never really got off the ground. The P5 never, ever even started serious talks about how to denuclearize and how to wind down their nuclear arsenals.

They did, especially after the Cold War, but there were never serious talks about how to get down to zero. So, in a sense, denuclearization didn't happen. And this is, of course, one of the grievances of the non-nuclear-weapon states that are parties to the NPT: the Big Five actually never went that way. And in that sense, you know, I'm likening this to what's happening currently, because you can

see how the P5—the permanent members, the nuclear-weapon states—have a common interest in telling everybody else, "Look, guys, you should commit to not seeking nuclear weapons. We, in turn, will try. We will try whatever we can to denuclearize. But you, first and foremost, must commit to not building nuclear weapons."

This is in the interest of all five of them. And then all five will forgive each other if they do not live up to their promise and do not actually work on denuclearization. Same thing now. All three—Russia, China, and the United States—have an interest in telling everybody else in the United Nations that they agree we have to make a change, we have to reform the United Nations, because that's what everybody else wants to hear, right? That's what the Indians want to hear. That's what the Germans want to hear. That's what the Japanese want to hear. They all want to hear that in the future they could potentially have a greater role to play within the United Nations. Yet all three of them have an interest in actually not living up to that.

It's good for them to talk about it. It's good for them to jointly make that kind of communiqué. It's good for them to string along the rest. But then you don't act on it because you already have veto power. Once again, the other two veto powers, France and the UK, were not even asked to join that kind of meeting. They are not even mentioned in this framework. And this again tells us that we have moved on quite significantly from 1945. But, you know, some things you just won't change and can't turn back. The last thing, maybe, that I would like to mention here, because it is something that gives me hope, is the fourth point: the three heads of state reaffirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

This is the precise formulation that Vladimir Putin, Mr. Lavrov, and the Russians in general have been using over the past years, the entire time, in order to say that we need to get to a point of not only winding down the war in Ukraine, but also reaching arms control agreements again. We need to get back to the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Treaty. We need to get back to the medium-range missile treaties. We need to get back to missile and weapons arms control, which has to be done in the way it was done before. And any one of you who has watched the many, many, many, many interviews that Scott Ritter gave as a former weapons inspector...

You all might know how Scott Ritter, of course, was working within these arms control treaties as a weapons inspector who went to Russia and got access to these weapons sites. He looked at how many of the weapons were being stored and how many were being decommissioned. And these are mechanisms that can work. We know that. We know that because they worked during the Cold War, or toward the end of the Cold War. They were set up, they worked in the 1990s, and we can get back to those. So, you know, international treaties and international law are not just about making promises about the future.

They're also about how to verify stuff and how to control stuff and how to create mechanisms to make sure that non-adhering parties feel that their non-adherence actually has consequences. In this sense, international law, or the way international treaties work, is all about consequences. The

worst thing that can happen is if you have a state like Israel that acts with impunity and can flout any and all treaties, including the Vienna treaties on the sanctity of diplomatic representations, as they did when they attacked the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, back in 2023.

That is, of course, a huge no-go. Or when they are acting in breach of the Genocide Convention by just indiscriminately bombing Gaza, by trying to ethnically cleanse the West Bank as well, and by creating these apartheid states. I mean, the impunity with which Israel can act is the reason why it then acts like that. Because it can. Because it's possible. Because it doesn't have to fear any kind of retaliation from anyone, since it is under the absolute protection of the hegemon, the United States. Of course, that has to do with lobbying. Of course, that has to do with systematic money politics inside the United States. But the outcome is exactly that: Israel is well protected and insulated from any and all consequences. Now, Iran has been trying to change that kind of equation.

Iran has also been trying to change the equation with the Americans. You know, the United States, for the longest time, was able to go out and bomb anyone under the sun that they wanted without having to fear any kind of consequences for themselves. That's why they could do Iraq. That's why they could do Libya. That's why they could rampage through many countries in Latin America with their covert weapons, with their regime change operations, because they never had to fear that anything would happen to them. You know, the United States can invade Venezuela and kidnap the president there without having to fear that their president will be kidnapped in turn.

And this type of impunity then breeds ever more violent behavior on the international stage. And now what we've seen with Iran is that Iran is trying to change that equation and say, like, okay, you can bomb us, but we can bomb your positions as well. We can kill your servicemen if you kill ours. We can destroy Israel's desalination plant if you ever attack our critical infrastructure. And thereby, the Iranians are trying to recreate reciprocity. Now, what we are seeing here within this framework is, of course, that one of the approaches of China and Russia as well is to somehow get back to the idea of reciprocity: that what is happening in one state can happen to another, and that what needs to be done is to reach an agreement on what we want and what we don't want.

On the negative side, we see that Russia and China agree that they want to insulate themselves as well from the ICC, that they want to insulate themselves from international law and from international criminal accountability. On the other hand, we also now see, in point number four, this very ominous formulation: “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” I am absolutely certain this was put into the declaration at the insistence of the Russians, again, because the Russians have been using this formulation and have been holding on to it for the entirety of the Ukraine war, and even before that. A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

They've been repeating this like a mantra, and now getting this into an agreement with the Russians and with the United States is a pretty big deal. Again, this is not something that will guarantee that the United States will never use nuclear weapons, but it's the most hopeful thing that we've seen in 2026. Because don't forget, earlier this year, around April, when the United States was two months

into its war with Iran, there was this point when Donald Trump threatened Iran with annihilation—the death of a civilization—which most of us, including a lot of American public figures and politicians like Tucker Carlson and Marjorie Taylor Greene, publicly called on X a veiled threat to use nuclear weapons.

Now, in contrast, what we have in this declaration is the agreement, not necessarily that they will never use nuclear weapons, but that a nuclear war itself cannot be won and must never happen, which to me actually is very, very hopeful. Because again, one of the things that we kind of assume is axiomatic is that if a power ever uses nuclear weapons again after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, then the nuclear taboo would fall. And then a nuclear war or nuclear exchange would be very likely. I mean, let's not forget: if the United States used a nuclear weapon on Iran, that would, of course, already count as a nuclear war.

So the fact that we have this wording here in the declaration—that a nuclear war itself cannot be won and must never be fought—is already encouraging. This does not at all guarantee that the US wouldn't do it, and it does not at all guarantee that Israel wouldn't do it. But in terms of encouraging signs about, you know, adults in the room and some form of hopeful diplomacy toward nuclear de-escalation, this is as hopeful as it gets in 2026. And of course, I'm speaking on the evening of Thursday, November 19th. As we all know, the United States has a habit of attacking Iran on Friday night or early Saturday morning.

So it's possible that within the next 36 hours, the United States will actually attack Iran and will basically break any and all of the principles that it signed up to here, including, of course, a nuclear strike on Iranian nuclear facilities, on some of their bunkers. We know that the Iranians are preparing for that. We know that the Iranians are talking about this. We know that the Iranians are very worried, since in The New York Times we now have all of this chatter about Iran's dams—that these dams are being used for military purposes. And, you know, The New York Times and mass media in the West right now are kind of providing the background for justifying strikes on Iran's critical water infrastructure. I mean, all of that is still possible. But looking at all the things that are happening here, I must say this is probably one of the most hopeful signs that maybe we're going to get back to some form of de-escalation after all. So that's it from me for tonight. Thank you very much for your attention. See you next time.