

Robert Barnes: US-Iran FINAL Confrontation as Russia Drops HEAVIEST Strikes Yet

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Tuesday, May 26, 2026, and our new friend Robert Barnes is here with us. Welcome back, Robert. Glad to be here. It's so nice to have you on. This is the first time we're talking, and I want to start, Robert, with the situation in the Middle East. The negotiations between Iran and the United States are not direct negotiations. The two sides are sending messages back and forth. At the same time, they're fighting each other. Just last night and the night before, we had the United States and Iran hitting at each other, firing missiles. And, you know, some people were killed—some sailors were killed. And Donald Trump, at the same time, is bragging about how beautiful, you know, the negotiations are happening right now as we talk. What is your understanding of the situation in the Middle East? If you were to mention—let's put it this way—what were the main objectives of the Trump administration with this war in the Middle East, and how many of those objectives have been achieved so far?

#Robert

I mean, the objectives are really the Israeli objectives disguised as American objectives. I mean, the president's objectives—and he was alone, other than Hegseth's death, as Max Blumenthal calls him—everybody else in the room was opposed. The most vocal opponent of going into any kind of regime change war was Vice President J.D. Vance. But the Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, had advised against it. Her intelligence report advised that what Bibi Netanyahu was forecasting—that the regime would collapse in four or five days and peace and freedom and liberty would emerge out of Iran in an American Western country fashion and model, and Iran couldn't wait to sign up to the Abraham Accords and do America's bidding, Shah-style 1978—and the intelligence report said literally none of that is going to happen, probably just the opposite.

The regime will be more hardline, and there will be a rally-around-the-flag effect. Joe Kent, head of counterterrorism, advised the same. He advised the same the summer before, last summer when this was under consideration and contemplation then. The Pentagon had advised that it was unlikely

to achieve the military objectives that the president was seeking, which at that time was basically the Israeli list—that Iran would have no capacity to have nuclear weapons, that there would be complete regime change in Iran in the way we're discussing. I'm not sure about some of the New York Times stories about certain people being floated.

I think that was sort of a belated effort to rationalize some things. It may have been some other insiders who he somehow accidentally killed. But in fact, it was full, complete regime change in a compliant manner, with no ballistic long-range or mid-range missile program, with no nuclear enrichment program, with no capacity to be a meaningful threat to Israel—that's really what the objective was. Now, for Israel, they would have been fine and would have actually preferred a chaotic, divided, fragmented Iran that looked like Syria, that looked like Libya, that looked like Iraq, that looked like Lebanon, the other places they've gone into over the years, or had America do it for them.

But Trump's thought was, it'll be a regime change—peace and freedom and liberty, somebody that loves Trump. They'll probably build big golden statues of him in downtown Tehran, like he thinks they're going to do in Venezuela for him, in Caracas sometime soon, like he's doing himself in his own presidential library. If this isn't a sign of somebody losing it, I don't know what is. How many people need to see? So, you know, that was the official set of objectives. Unofficially, it was really Iran—Israel's objectives. And it was Trump's increasingly diminished decision-making process. That is due to what people around the White House described to me all the way back in January as basically early-stage behavioral frontal lobe dementia, which is, you lose your sense of empathy.

You start to have delusions of grandeur beyond, you know, Trump's always had a healthy ego, but at a whole different level. And to give you some comparisons, first term, go back to **Art of the Deal**, other books—he believed in positive thinking, like he came up with a religious tradition that was about positive thinking, Norman Vincent Peale and all that. But he said, always expect the best, but also at the same time plan for the worst. So it was always tethered to this hardcore realism. Trump used to say, all that's ever going to be offered with a Middle Eastern war is blood and sand. And all you'll get is a lot of blood trying to fight for a little sand.

So that was even though he was a deep skeptic of every Middle Eastern conflict. Going back to the 90s, in a range of public statements and comments he'd made over the years, the New York Times had a deep dive in part on this in the buildup to the war. All of that is gone. So the geopolitical realism is gone. Being tethered to realism is gone. He used to love second opinions. I mean, I was his lawyer for a period of time during the 2020 election. He would see, you know, 50, 55, 60. I mean, there was no limit to the second opinion. It was kind of frustrating at times. Now he doesn't want any second opinions. He doesn't do any contingency planning.

In fact, he doesn't want to hear anything he might even emotionally respond to negatively. His own chief of staff, Susie Wiles, was advising people back in late fall and early winter, don't share information with the president that he might react negatively to emotionally. So that's how we kind

of got there. The Israel lobby figured this out before a lot of other people did. That's why they had Bibi come in February when Vance, by the way, was out of town. He was over in Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus. And that's when they used it, because Trump's emotion, you know, his declining emotional state, confabulates all the time. His memento memory—he remembers what he wants, doesn't remember what he doesn't want.

He fancies he creates a memory that didn't happen. That's why he reinterprets the Iran deal at different times in his way, even though it's not the deal. He convinces himself that it is the deal. So, you know, that confabulation is probably the worst part of this. But it's not the only negative part of the decision-making process. And he's become obsessed with being this, like, emperor-type figure. That's why he's compared himself to Jesus, compared himself to the pope, claims he picked the pope, claims he was going to pick the next prime leader of Iran, says maybe he'll be the next president of Venezuela or maybe the next prime minister of Israel.

#Nima

He hasn't decided yet.

#Robert

This is not normal behavior, even for Trump's relatively abnormal first term. You saw none of this in his first term. Viciously attacking his longest supporters and people like Marjorie Taylor Greene, running them out of Congress, spending all of his political capital and the Israel lobby's cash to take out Thomas Massie, who is the only real representative of that wing of the Republican Party, the old Ron Paul wing of the Republican Party, but just adding Maha to that equation. And going after Congresswoman Lauren Boebert. Right now he's advocating en masse for Lindsey Graham, the queen of the war whores, always inviting us into her brothel of blood. You know, Lady Lindsey is now his number one favorite person to talk to every night when he's not talking every night to Sean Hannity. His main favorite sources, like the Pentagon, have told him repeatedly that no, in fact, we haven't destroyed 70, 80, 90 percent.

We haven't obliterated, because their real Navy is the boats and the torpedoes and the drones and the little mini subs. We haven't destroyed their Air Force because their Air Force isn't a conventional one. We haven't even actually destroyed their planes either. But it's their drones and their missiles built in those missile cities. We haven't destroyed their missile cities. But he convinces himself that we have. They only have a few that can occasionally cause some issues. And that's why he comes up with crazy plans like Project Freedom, you know, navigation, all the rest that the Qataris and Saudis had to quash before it got out of hand. So his delusional mindset is a continued problem. He just, you know, advocates really dumb stuff.

But everybody else — General Kane, Admiral Cooper, other people in the military chain of command — were not even going to execute on his destroy-civilization plan with Iran, and told him so. They

said they would redefine the list to only be true dual-use infrastructure, which is what's legally required to be just legal under American law, not to mention international standards and whatnot — not to be a war crime, which is a law in the United States. So he's been advised of all those things, but at any given moment, he doesn't want to be Obama, because he made a huge deal with the JCPOA and pretends things were in the JCPOA that weren't, and so forth. So he's scared of any deal that gives them money, scared of any deal that looks like they can enrich.

But at the same time, he's terrified of looking like Jimmy Carter. He doesn't want to look like he doesn't want hostages left behind. So that's where Joe Kent has been very effective, hammering that point over and over and over again. If you put soldiers on the ground, probably some are going to end up like hostages. You're going to be Jimmy Carter on steroids. He's also terrified of being George W. Bush. He doesn't want to be the guy in a dragged-out, failed war in the Middle East. So the logical thing to do would, of course, be to exit rather than escalate. But I've told people I cannot imagine a deal ever being signed and delivered because Trump is too terrified of the Obama comparison and too deferential to the Israel lobby.

#Robert

At the same time, I can't really see him escalating as long as the Saudis and Qataris are exercising their veto, as long as his own U.S. military and intelligence are saying this will backfire against you, as long as the economy is screaming. Deutsche Bank came up with something they call the pressure index. And so, follow the 10-year Treasury. Once it gets over 4.5, Trump tends to topple. If gas gets over 4.50 — it already is — Trump tends to topple. If his approval ratings drop into the 30s, Trump tends to topple. He's got all three going on at the moment. And his own family is deeply tied in. Kushner and the Witkoffs and Don Jr. and Eric are tied into investments from the various venture capital and other funds they've set up, getting fabulously rich off his second term. He puts any oil monarch to shame. He puts any Latin American tin-cup dictator to shame.

Puts any Eastern European oligarch to shame. Nobody compares to the amount of... Trump has added more money to the family and friends' net worth than all of the prior presidents before and after their presidencies combined, in just a year. Well, a lot of that's tied to the Middle East. What happens if the Saudis are in real trouble? His own personal finances, family finances, get put into danger. So you have those restraints, too. And then China and Russia have been imposing restraints. He really went to China thinking he was going to get China to capitulate, which was mind-boggling. But it gives you an idea of where the confabulation comes from. I mean, they changed Rubio's name because he's banned from coming into China, so they changed it in a way that sounds like "Ratio." And little Rubio is wearing that little badge.

#Nima

Look at me. I'm a rat. I'm a rat right there. He had no idea what the symbols meant.

#Robert

I call him Narco Marco because of his family's history of ties to the cocaine cowboys. That's how Narco Marco got his family going financially in the States. Now the Iranian explosive media, those kids that did those Lego videos, they've created a Narco Marco label, which is great. It might not have helped my personal relations with the State Department.

#Nima

That's another story for another day.

#Robert

So I think there's enough restraint — the incoming midterms, the economic problems, the lack of alliances, the opposition from both China and Russia, the other great powers in the world — that I think escalation is a low risk. But because of his declining mental state, it's never zero.

#Nima

What does Netanyahu want from Donald Trump? Because every time—remember when he announced the ceasefire after 39 days of war? Right after the announcement of the ceasefire, we had the huge Israeli attack on Lebanon. And as we talk right now, we have the same sort of attacks in Lebanon because Netanyahu, he's not feeling good with the ongoing—it's not a negotiation—ongoing messages between Iran and the United States, because they feel maybe something comes out of these sorts of talks. That is not—but Donald Trump did everything for them, in my opinion. This is the ultimate sort of attempt on the part of the Trump administration to do something for Benjamin Netanyahu.

He wanted this war for such a long, long time, and he got it. And today's Israel is not even comparable to what it was before this war started, in terms of militarily, politically, geopolitically. You know, before October 7th, they had the Abraham Accords somehow going on, and that's not there anymore. And there is nothing else for the Trump administration to do for Israel. I don't know why he's insisting on the American presence in the Middle East. Not only Benjamin Netanyahu — we had Lindsey Graham, as you mentioned — Lindsey Graham says this is disastrous for Israel if Donald Trump leaves the region with the sort of conditions that we're witnessing right now. And what can he do, in your opinion?

#Robert

I mean, there's what Bibi should do, but there's one aspect of it that's quasi-religious, another aspect of it that's just geopolitical reality. So taking the geopolitical reality part, small powers surrounded by countries they perceive as hostile or adverse tend to try to parasitically latch on to a

great power and get that great power to fight their wars for them. They tend to be expansionistic in their minds as defense. And so it's a risk with any kind of small power like Israel is right out of the gate, just from geopolitical history. The second aspect is the Greater Israel Project that has been an obsession of a certain wing of Zionism, not always the dominant wing, but the current dominant wing of Zionism.

Under Bibi Netanyahu, they've aligned their Likud Party politics in Israel to the U.S. politics and evangelical boomer-con politics here in America, which was a marriage of convenience politically made in the late 1970s. But it is dying in the United States. Israel is using up all of its political capital. You see it sort of in that one little race in Kentucky for Thomas Massey. You see it fully displayed. They had to spend more money than they've ever spent before to beat a congressman. And, you know, he was five points away from winning — got 45 percent of the vote. So it took everything they possibly could. You know, they were blackmailing a range of groups to keep their mouths shut about Massey.

Turning Point, where Charlie Kirk's favorite congressman was Thomas Massey, decided to keep their mouths shut, even take potshots at him because of the blackmail, extortionate threat pressure they were under from the Israel lobby. A wide range of other influencers that had long championed him — people like Matt Walsh and Michael Knowles at the Daily Wire — they kept their mouths shut, even though Massey was one of their favorite congressmen. So you had a wide range. And then you had all the local political pressure brought. Congresswoman Boebert endorses him, and President Trump threatens her, even though she's one of his longest-standing allies in the House of Representatives. But why did they have to do that?

Why did they have to expend that degree of political capital in a closed Republican primary, where often a majority of the electorate are boomer cons that were going to be told they have to vote against Massey for Jesus on the Sunday before Election Day? It's because Israel has collapsed amongst every other group in America. They now have a net negative with young evangelicals. Evangelical Christians under the age of 50 disapprove of Israel, are more sympathetic to the Palestinians than they are to Israel. And that's amplified times ten with every other political group in the country. And so, given that, they think everything that they ever want to get, they think they got to get now. They think they got to get their Christmas wish — well, I guess their Hanukkah wish list — in quick, because it's going to be gone maybe in six months. The Democrats take the House and the Senate, and Trump is facing a bunch of impeachments.

Is he really going to be able to wage a war in Iran in December and January? I don't see it. He'll be lucky to even survive that impeachment. The risk of removal will be high as his base discovers what Glenn Greenwald recently educated some of them on, which is the scale, scope, and severity of corruption. This is the most corrupt, self-enriching administration in American history. And that's saying something, you know, about American presidents and politicians. They make Nancy Pelosi's stock trading look like amateur hour by comparison. And so, in that context, they know everything they got to get, they got to get in the next six months.

That's why he's paranoid of any deal, paranoid of anything that delays this until after the midterms, because he knows that Trump's a dead man walking politically once that happens. Then you have it compounded. You have the Greater Israel Project, which has this sort of almost quasi-religious texture to it. You've got this sort of small regional power wanting to expand its borders and to parasitically feed off a great power in order to achieve that, because they can't without it. And then you've got the upcoming midterms that are going to sink the Israel lobby in the U.S. politically.

Both parties are going to face major trouble. My preview is in 2028. Whichever Democratic candidate is the most anti-Israel candidate, much like the Republican candidate in 2016 that was the most anti-immigration, is going to get nominated. The Democratic candidate that is perceived as the most anti-Israel candidate will be the next Democratic presidential nominee. And so that puts maximum pressure to get as much done as fast as possible now, and no delays in the Israeli mindset. And then Bibi is facing election in the fall, and if he doesn't get reelected, he goes to prison for life because of the corruption scandals he's found dead to rights on.

So what does he see? He thinks the war can't be perceived as a loss, and any kind of deal will be perceived as a loss, as even Robert Kagan says. The neocon champion has confessed on the public pages of major U.S. publications. And so it will be seen as surrender. It will be seen as unnecessary sacrifice. And so Bibi's willing to risk everything. He's willing to risk Israel's own future to save his own hide, because basically all these projects depend on the Iran war continuing and even escalating between now and November, or Bibi's probably spending the rest of his life in an Israeli prison.

#Nima

Looking at the situation in the United States, the domestic policy, in your opinion, the negotiation, the way that Donald Trump — we know that he wants to get out of the conflict in the Middle East. He really wants that. But how much of what's going on in his mind is a product of the domestic policy of the United States, and how much of it comes from the reality of the war in the Middle East? It seems to me that he feels that he's trapped in something that is so dangerous, getting so dangerous for him. And because he's losing — you remember when he went to the GCC countries and how generous they were in those days, you know, the way they were communicating with Donald Trump, giving him a lot of money. You know, they had, you know, the Qatari government gave him an airplane, and it was amazing what was going on.

And right now, it seems that they're feeling so much pain in the GCC countries because they can't sell their oil, their energy, fertilizers, you name it. And they have their difficulties right now. They want to get out of these sorts of problems they're facing. And Donald Trump has his own sort of issues, as you've just mentioned, in terms of domestic policy. But when you compare the domestic issues and the foreign issues for Donald Trump, which one is more important, in your opinion?

#Robert

So a rational Trump would be seeing that the current crisis in Iran is crushing his coalition, dividing it and fracturing it in ways that may be very difficult to recover from, and at the same time sinking the U.S. economy. U.S. consumer sentiment is the most negative it's ever been. If you look at independent voters and working-class voters, it's the worst it's ever been with both of those voter groups. That plays into the midterms, where he has the lowest approvals on issues like the economy and cost of living of any president ever polled. If you put it in that context, the rational thing would be to exit as quickly as possible, with as minimal long-term harm as possible. Unfortunately, it only sporadically motivates him, even though he knows if he loses the House by substantial margins and loses the Senate — and the more Senate seats he loses, the greater the risk.

It's a guarantee he loses the House, he gets impeached. But the greater the risk, he actually loses a removal vote, a conviction vote in the Senate, and becomes the first president ever removed from the presidency. So you would think that that would motivate him, but it only sporadically and erratically does because his mindset is so focused on "Emperor Trump is about to conquer the world." And he convinces himself of these things on a nightly basis. And so his diminished mental state is why you're getting irrational actions. Because you're right, there's rational self-interest — get the heck out of this. And sporadically he realizes that. But then it comes back to, "I bet if we did this, everything would be great and I'll be a hero again." And he can't get his mind out of that trap.

And every night he listens to, talks to Sean Hannity every night, talks to Rupert Murdoch often, even though he's suing him, which is ironic. He talks to people like Laura Loomer. Laura Loomer. I mean, this chick's probably already in a nut house. There are people that think that her fake apartment is probably in the back of a nut house. I mean, just totally crazy. But these are the people that the President of the United States is talking to. But he won't listen to Tulsi Gabbard. He won't listen to Joe Kent. He won't listen to Amaryllis Fox, who just left as Deputy Director of National Intelligence, or Deputy to the Director of National Intelligence. Won't listen to Michael Anton, who left the State Department. Won't listen to Elbridge Colby, who's the Undersecretary of Defense. Won't even listen to Ratcliffe and Rubio when they've warned of problems.

#Nima

Now, Rubio goes back and forth because he wants the Israel lobby to back him in 2028.

#Robert

So he does one thing one minute, another thing the next minute. Our worst Secretary of State probably ever, Narco Marco. Yet people praise him as if he's the best. It's mind-boggling. It's a fantasy fake world they live in. But it's the same fantasy fake world that Mark Levin is living in, Lindsey Graham is living in, the Israel lobby in general is living in. And so it should motivate him, because the more this goes on, the longer this drags on, the more it is guaranteed to sink him in the

midterms. I mean, my prediction right now is he would lose 40 or more House seats, and he would lose as many as 10 Senate seats.

He would at least lose the Senate, no doubt about that, but he could lose even more Senate seats that nobody thinks are up for grabs, like Texas, Florida, Nebraska, Montana. Kansas could suddenly show up. Mississippi could suddenly show up being competitive on election night with the way things are trending. And forget about Ohio, Iowa, Maine, and those states, the North Carolina, Michigan, or Georgia they were hoping for. And in that context, he's in serious and severe trouble. But he doesn't consistently recognize it for two reasons: his confabulation and diminished mental state, and the fear people have of giving him negative information due to his temper that just goes off on them for sharing with him. And then the—and you can see that.

#Robert

I mean, this is a guy who was willing to let Marjorie Taylor Greene—his longest-standing ally in the House—get death threats and tell her it's her fault if her own son dies because of the death threats the President of the United States had unleashed on her family. So that gives you—he is so diminished mentally. And we've had little bits of that, you know, obviously with Joe Biden. Ronald Reagan had early-stage Alzheimer's at the end of his presidency. Woodrow Wilson wasn't even really the president the last six months; his wife ran the White House. But not this degree of dangerousness. This is like Dr. Strangelove come to life. We've got a few generals that think that way, some apocalyptic mid-range military officials who think they're doing God's bidding to bring Jesus back if they could just bring the apocalypse in.

I mean, it's terrifying that that's the mindset. Also, you can apply with Trump a lot of confession through projection. Whatever he says about Iran and the negotiations, assume it's what he himself is up to. Who's begging for something? It's Trump, not Iran. Who can't keep their word? It's Trump, not Iran. All of those factors. But his diminished mental state makes it very difficult to do the most obvious rational option, which is to exit. The main restraint on escalation is still his own Pentagon, his own intelligence agencies, his own vice president, and all of his allies in the Gulf, other than the Emirates, who are just crazy.

#Nima

What is your assessment of his visit to China? He went to China. He wanted... One of the main objectives was the Strait of Hormuz. And the other point where he wanted... I don't know what was the meaning of that huge, you know, delegation going with him. All these, you know, Elon Musk and all the heads of, you know... He had everybody, you know, going to China. And we haven't seen anything coming out of that summit. But what he was trying to do—the meeting, the summit by itself—didn't have any sort of important outcome, but it was important because this is the first time you see the two leaders equally meeting each other.

We haven't seen that sort of scene before, and this is something new between the United States and China, because China is just growing in a way that we haven't seen before in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine. They were so shy, if you remember those days when the war started. We want Russia to negotiate. We are not agreeing, you know, we don't like the invasion of Ukraine. But coming to today, 2026, you see their position is totally different from what it was before the war in Ukraine started, then the war in the Middle East. And they were in the background. Right now they're playing their geopolitical games. And what is that game, and how is that going to be perceived by the Trump administration?

#Robert

Any opinion? So Trump thought the trip to China would be a celebratory trip to get China to bow to the president. That he was going to be like his favorite head chopper-in-chief president there in Syria. He was going to have a Persian head in one hand and a Venezuelan head in the other. And he was going to come off that plane with all the big indicators of American wealth and power, all the billionaires and the American oligarchs, basically. And that China and that Xi would be there at the bottom of the plane, bowing to the great American leader and saying, what can I do for you, Mr. President? How can I tell Russia to stop the war in Ukraine? How can I tell Iran to stop closing the Strait of Hormuz or controlling it? And instead, he gets off the plane.

And it's not even some guy. Nobody even knows who he is. You don't even think he's a Politburo member sitting there, which President Trump himself had said, if I ever go to China and it isn't the president there, I'm getting right back on that plane and flying out. That isn't what he did. And so then he goes to the meeting, and basically China, from the words of someone high up in the administration, their exact quote to me was, China told Trump to pound sand. All of it. No, we're not going to help you on Iran. No, we're not going to help you on Russia. No, we're not cutting any deals with you. No, we're not going to give any of your tech oligarchs or Boeing oligarchs or any of the other oligarchs any bigger piece of the China pie.

You'll be lucky if we throw them some tokens and some crumbs. And let's lecture you about the issue of Japan's rearmament. And let's lecture you about why you're not going to be sending any more weapons anytime soon to Taiwan. That's what ended up happening. He didn't even know how to process it. He was so startled and stunned by it because of what he had. It's the risk of confabulation. When you start imagining things that just aren't true, you start making all of these bad decisions, not only in who you trust and not only what you believe, but what you think will happen. I mean, it was embarrassing for everybody except Elon, because everybody wanted a selfie with Elon.

But, you know, other than that, it was when Apple already got what they wanted from Trump by allowing it to be exempt from all of their Chinese-made parts, and a betrayal of Trump's industrial policy promises over the last decade about reshoring American manufacturing away from China. But other than that, Boeing got, well, maybe we'll send you 100 planes, maybe 200, maybe none. You

knew it when we didn't even put out a mutual joint statement. We put out our version. China puts out a totally different version. And generally, I wouldn't normally want to say this about America or Trump, but basically, you're almost always better off listening to what the foreign nation says as to what actually happened, because Trump just confabulates it into imagination.

Basically, China actually increased the problem. They couldn't even get a public guarantee that China wouldn't continue to arm Iran. And in fact, then you see that right afterwards, Putin comes to town, and they signed not one, not two, not five, not ten—forty different agreements covering a wide range of cooperation and big signature and signed deals. Where all Trump got out of it was, gee, to say, well, I took you to the same garden they took Putin. Trump's like, oh, this is special. This is so special. I mean, that was pitiful. Just sad. And so he's getting dog-walked by China because he's decided to go into bed with Bibi.

I mean, ask yourself what kind of message Israel was sending when the very first meeting in the White House with Bibi Netanyahu is to give Trump a golden pager, like they blew up a bunch of people. I mean, I don't know. That wasn't exactly very subtle as signatures go. As gifts go, it's like, you know, we own you. And if not, be too bad if you got blown up someday. So it's cost him everything. It's cost him his China policy. It's cost him his Russia policy. It's cost him his domestic political coalition. It's cost him his U.S. economy. I mean, it's really, truly destroyed his presidency and a lifetime. And the China visit was just the latest demonstration of that.

#Nima

Robert, we know that Donald Trump somehow felt before the war started that he's going to go into the Middle East. It's going to be four days or, you know, it's going to be four days or one week of fighting, and they're going to have a regime change in Iran. He said that to GCC countries. It's going to be a short-term sort of conflict war, and we're going to change everything in the Middle East, and we're going to have the Abraham Accords and so forth and so on. Then you see what is happening right now. He didn't get any of those objectives that you've mentioned. And right now, it seems that the war in Ukraine is no longer his priority, which is so dangerous, in my opinion, looking at what's going on between Ukraine and Russia. We had drone attacks on Russia. Russia is responding using Russian missiles and other types of missiles.

But they hit military bases in Ukraine. And if I'm not mistaken, it wasn't in Kiev; it was at the margins of the city of Kiev. And then you see Europeans are providing Ukraine with drones. We had the United Kingdom at least confessing that they've sent recently 148 drones to Ukraine. This is a huge escalation that is happening. And nobody seems to care in Washington about the escalation in Ukraine because they're so much trapped in the situation in the Middle East, and the global economy is under tremendous pressure from the Strait of Hormuz and the blockade, the Iranian blockade, the blockade of the blockade, and the complexity that we're witnessing right now. How do you see the situation in Ukraine? Where are we with this escalation that is happening right now?

#Robert

So it's another example of what failed by being captured by the Israel lobby, which is that the president repeatedly promised he never would have gotten us into the Ukraine war. It never would have happened had he been president at the time, and that he would solve the war within 24 hours. Early on, he took steps in that direction by saying that we will not launch, allow, authorize, green-light, or provide the satellite targeting capabilities for any missile launches into Russia. And he thought that was insane. Biden did it at the very end of his term, and the only reason why Russia didn't retaliate then was Trump's public promises that he wouldn't allow that to happen.

And he was marching along, and it was the famous meeting in February of 2025 where they scolded Zelensky right in the White House with the vice president and the president right there. So it looked like we were moving in the right direction despite his appointment of General Kellogg, who is a neocon war whore going way back and a basic lunatic whose own daughter was making money off supporting the Ukrainian effort in Ukraine. But then you get the Anchorage meeting. And in the Anchorage meeting, Trump made certain agreements with President Putin. My understanding of that is it was basically the terms of what people at The Duran have called Istanbul Plus, which is basically the same agreement that originally was agreed to by the Ukrainians and Russians that was then blown up by Biden and Boris Johnson.

And what it was is the four territories plus Crimea that Russia recognizes as Russian would be recognized by the United States as Russian, that Ukraine would withdraw all military forces from all four of those regions and would also recognize that those are Russian, would recognize and respect Russian language and Russian religion in Ukraine, both of which have been under threat, that they would conduct fair and true elections in a relatively rapid time frame, and that they would agree to never join NATO. And there was talk of an overarching restructuring of the European security architecture to withdraw U.S. troops back to pre-1991 NATO borders. And so that was, my understanding, what was agreed to in Anchorage. That's why Russia was so happy about it. Putin tried to stick with it for as long as possible.

And then almost right away, Trump walked it back when he realized he couldn't bulldoze Zelensky and the Europeans into agreement, and when the war whores in the military-industrial complex and the deep state of America objected because they're obsessed with Putin. I mean, it's amazing. You have the West wanting to wage war with the three greatest, longest-standing civilizations in existence — the Russians, the Persians, and the Chinese. I mean, who comes up— I mean, I wouldn't recommend picking on one of them. Why pick on all three? That's a level of delusional insanity of the West in the current moment. We have an intellectually incestuous, born-and-bred professional political class that is more incompetent than they're even corrupt. And I didn't even think that was possible. But I often say I don't mind criminals, I don't mind stupid people, but don't put them together or you get a disaster. And that's what we have.

And no one in the West is respecting Russia's deterrence. That's why you're seeing such increasing talk from, you know, Stanislav Krapivnik—if I'm pronouncing his last name right—who said that the Russians are like a rubber band. You can pull and pull and pull, and they'll be patient and patient and patient. But when they respond, it will be hard and fast. I think it may have been an old German great leader—might have been the Kaiser, or Otto, whichever one it was—who said that the Russians are slow to get on their horse, but once they're on their horse, they ride hard and fast.

And that's what the West is about to discover, because I think they're not done hitting the different places that they had stayed away from in decision-making influence because of Western presence. They were avoiding hitting NATO military officers, American military officers, British military officers, German military officers, other military officers from foreign nations, French military officers that are actually commanding the Ukrainian military effort. And I mean, you saw a sense of when Trump was starting to lose it and that he allowed to have happen in December, something he never would have before, which was an attempt to murder and assassinate President Putin.

That was a CIA joint operation with Ukraine, through those drones. I mean, it's not a coincidence. It happened while they thought he was located there, waiting for Trump to call him back after talking to Zelensky a lot of times. That's why that attack can't happen if you understand the limitations of Ukrainian satellite and targeting information without U.S. direct complicity. Even Ratcliffe was bragging about that same morning, leaking to the New York Times that he had gotten the approval of Trump to engage in an illicit drone warfare, but they would disguise it as Ukrainian and, ha ha, that way I won't get blamed for it. Well, it's hard to not get blamed for it if you're leaking it to the New York Times.

Now the Russians didn't have any doubt about it. And they even presented that information to the Trump administration because they took the downed drones that showed the map of where they were going, which was Putin's address. We pretended it was somewhere else. Trump was just shocked that he got caught. But that gave you a sense of a very declining mentality and mindset. And then all of a sudden people started questioning, was the U.S. involved in the Israeli surprise attack on Hamas negotiators in Qatar? How much was the president engaged in advance in the surprise attack on the Iranians during negotiations in the summer of 2025 that led to the 12-day war?

And then they see him do it and brag about it this latest time in the middle of negotiations, waiting for the Iranians to get together to discuss the negotiations, and then murder as many of them as we possibly can. And this is a guy who's bragging about kidnapping the leader of Venezuela, now is seeking to indict and likely kidnap the leader of Cuba, or former leader of Cuba, Raul Castro, out of the old Cuban vendetta blood oath that people like Narco Marco have from his Cuban family heritage and history. And you just see no limit. Talking about grabbing Greenland or some part of it whenever he wants. The self-restraint isn't there. The focus on America isn't there. The focus on his political future isn't there. The rational decision-making isn't there.

#Nima

And it's not only blown up in the Iran war conflict and how disastrous that could be for the global economy.

#Robert

But it's also blown back and put Russia in a position where they're going to have to prove to the world exactly what their deterrence means. And I hope it doesn't escalate to where it could escalate, because it could escalate, as is now being talked about in moderate, relatively moderate circles within the Russian geopolitical establishment, military establishment. They need to use weapons directly against European countries, and that they need to consider using nuclear weapons against European countries. That conversation is happening at a whole different level in Russia over the last three months, ever since the assassination attempt on Putin, the failure of President Trump to deliver on his promises of peace in the Anchorage Agreement, the continued escalation against Russia using U.S. military tactics and strategy and targeting satellite information.

And I think they're going to be—I mean, a lot of them apparently are not moving from their facilities in Kiev. Well, some are probably going to get hit, and they're probably going to get hit this week. I mean, once they killed all those girls, those schoolgirls—schoolgirls learning to teach other schoolgirls—I mean, what is this? We've become Israeli, right? We look for kids to kill. I mean, it's what Israel does all the time in Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza. We did it at the beginning of the Iran war, apparently using AI, which the Trump administration is deeply invested in personally, not just politically, apparently to target and kill and triple-tap a little girls' school in Iran. And now we do the same thing again in Lugansk, because anybody who thinks the Ukrainians did it on their own is mistaken.

But it may be Palantir. You may be seeing the forensic fingerprints of what AI looks like in modern warfare, which is—as a lawyer—they keep trying to pitch AI to me. It's complete crap, complete crap. Not only is it a bubble on the stock market, but it is crap. It gets stuff wrong at about a 50% ratio. I mean, you can't afford a 3% error rate if you're in military targeting. What happens if you have a 50% error rate? I mean, I suspect AI is behind the targeting of the girls in Iran and the targeting of the girls' school in Lugansk, the Russian-occupied portion of Ukraine. But it's going to trigger these kinds of blowbacks. And it's all because we've got a demented old man as king of America.

#Nima

Robert, if I were to compare the Biden administration to the Trump administration, or if I were to mention the mastermind of the Biden administration, I would say Jake Sullivan together with Antony Blinken were the masterminds of the Biden administration. But we had some sort of divisions. For

example, in the case of Ukraine, we had Victoria Nuland playing a very important and substantial role. Or when it came to sending long-range missiles to Ukraine—you remember Starmer coming to Washington, talking with the Biden administration—then we had the Pentagon coming out saying, no, that's not going to happen. That's a huge escalation between the United States and Russia. That's not going to happen.

But we don't have that sort of division in the Trump administration. Looking at the head of the Pentagon, Pete Hegseth, I don't see a guy who has some sort of, you know, personality that can run the Pentagon. The Pentagon is so important, by the way. And the other one, the Secretary of State, Marco Rubio—who's this guy? Nobody knows. We are—the United States is negotiating with Russia in Ukraine and with Iranians—and both negotiations are done with two guys, two real estate, you know, shysters from New York, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. Nobody knows what is the role of Marco Rubio in the whole calculation. Who's this administration? Who's the mastermind of this administration?

#Robert

Well, it's very much the Israel lobby, and they've influenced it at every level. So there was a wide range of people that were going to have mid-level staffing that the Israel lobby systematically removed from appointments—either got them fired or never hired in the first place—over the first six months of the president's administration. And then the second thing they did is they infiltrated various corrupt wings around the Trump team. This included Kushner and Witkoff, who've got real estate ties to them, venture capital deals with them, co-investments with them, but also increasingly Eric Trump and Don Trump Jr.

Don Trump Jr. set up a special exclusive club in D.C., partnering up with people connected to the Mercer family, who owns Breitbart. People are wondering why Breitbart suddenly became such a war-hawk publication. Alex Marlow is on the Salem Media Network, whose main strategist is literally a foreign agent on a \$6 million contract from the Israeli government. They infiltrated it through the sort of influencer space and the media space—the Israel lobby—because they knew they needed that kind of leverage to protect their ongoing conflicts. But it had all these other knock-on effects: knock-on effects in the Iran war, knock-on effects in the Russia war, knock-on effects in domestic antitrust policy.

Knock-on effects in U.S. political and domestic economic policy, a wide range of things. So, for example, they embedded people like Mike Davis and Will Chamberlain. You might see Will Chamberlain hop around Piers Morgan and other people. I've known Will for a long time. Nobody confused him with a geopolitical genius. He's an inherited money kid. You know, the old joke about being born with a golden spoon—he thought he hit a triple. He was born on third base, ends up on second base, and thinks he hit a double because of a lack of skills, that kind of thing. But Mike Davis is neck-deep in this. He's getting huge.

He's an unregistered lobbyist, which is a crime in the United States, working for a lot of these big corporations that sabotage a bunch of the antitrust deals. They ran Gail Slater out of the antitrust division, ran everybody else out of the antitrust division that was consistent with the Trump 2024 populist platform. And they were allies of Vice President Vance, all to line their pockets. And the quid pro quo is, we will go out and defend Israel and the Israel lobby and its opinions in the court of public opinion. In exchange, we get fabulously rich.

So it happens as well with all of the sort of military-industrial complex. Ratcliffe, as I like to call him, the CIA director—emphasis on the part that's "rat"—he is aligned with MI6 and Mossad. I, in fact, debated, got into an argument earlier this year with the vice president himself. I put out a post, and I said an autistic on Telegram would know better about what is happening in Ukraine than the president and the vice president combined. And that got his attention. So he asked which accounts he should follow. But my response was, well, probably half a dozen of them.

But it was clear he really believed and was being spoon-fed bad intel that it's just a frozen stalemate, Russian casualties are massive, that Russia's economy is struggling. It's like, none of this is true. Russia's fighting an old-school battle of attrition, which is to a degree restrained by the drone warfare that has taken over the battlefield. And they're coming up with countermeasures to that. But what they really want is to destroy the Ukrainian army and just let them keep coming in, coming in, coming in, go a little bit, then let more come in, come in, come in. And they're to the point—I mean, you can just see it in the exchange body count.

You know, it's about 40 dead Ukrainians for every dead Russian. That was leaked—you know, somebody hacked the Ukrainian military—and it's Ukraine that has 1.7 million plus casualties if you include deaths and severe disabilities, not Russia. Russia has a tiny portion of that. Russia's economy is doing just fine, contrary to all the fake news. But you had people in the White House, in the administration, believing this fake information because they sidelined Tulsi Gabbard. And who was it that did it? It was the Israel lobby. They used the first set of Israel attacks to sideline her, to sideline Joe Kent, to sideline anybody, to sideline Amaryllis Fox, to sideline Elbridge Colby, to sideline Michael Anton, to sideline anybody that said boo, and then waged a subtle—or somewhat subtle—but under-observed campaign against J.D. Vance, that Vance was really a traitor, this or that.

#Robert

They run different sabotage campaigns on different days against Vance.

#Robert

Simply because he had opposed this activity, even though his chief of staff is deeply tied into the Israel lobby. And I think at some point Vance himself figured out he wasn't being given accurate intel, spoon-fed through that individual. So you had all of these efforts that have left a kind of anchorless, headless White House beyond what the Israel lobby has been. Israel has done to the

Trump administration what it's done to all the Mideastern governments it's overthrown. It's destabilized them, fragmented them, and made them weak at the top, and done so systematically that has impacted everything throughout the administration, not just its policy on Iran, on Gaza, on Lebanon, on Syria, Iraq, or Libya.

And it's impacted its Russian policy. So the great détente that many had hopes for between the U.S. and Russia, that Trump himself has been campaigning on since 2015, that led to Russiagate in the first place—those fake and false allegations and accusations to try to prohibit him from obtaining a Nixon-style détente with Russia—which makes sense in this great power competition, particularly if you want them more aligned with us than in bed permanently with China, which is what we forced them to do to our great detriment—he's blown that up. Most people in Russia and the Russian political leadership no longer trust Trump at all.

His constant murdering of people while we're doing diplomatic negotiations, and then reneging on negotiations, and then rewriting those negotiations afterwards, and then coming up with fake information about what's happening geopolitically, has destabilized everybody's confidence in him globally. Nobody believed—like in his first term, they might not have always agreed with him, but they respected him and thought he could act independently of conventional Western restraint or constraints about ideologically driven motivations. But now they don't have any confidence in him because they don't think he's sane. They don't think he's smart. They don't think he's reliable. And in fact, sadly, they're right.

#Nima

Where do you see NATO today? Because you remember when Finland and Sweden joined NATO previously. Joe Biden was just bragging about, "We are getting bigger, we are getting more powerful than before. The alliance is growing stronger." And right now we've seen the war in the Middle East. None of these European countries were willing to join the United States to open up the Strait of Hormuz. We have this sort of division between the United States and Europeans when it comes to the war in Ukraine. They're not on the same page, and they have their basic differences in Ukraine.

And NATO is somehow confused. Who's going to produce the arms for NATO? Donald Trump is bragging about increasing the budget of NATO from 2% of their GDP to 5%. None of them has reached 5%, but some of them got to 3%, if I'm not mistaken. Where is NATO today compared to what it was before all this chaos and these wars happening? Let's assume before, I would say, in December 2021, before the war, those days when Russia sent two letters, one of them to Washington, the other one to the NATO headquarters. We had NATO in those days and NATO today. How do you compare the two NATOs?

#Robert

So I think the old statement about NATO, which was it's designed to keep America in, Russia out, and the Germans down, it's not really doing well in that third element these days, where the Germans are talking about rearmament. But somebody needs to tell the French that Napoleon is gone. Somebody needs to tell the Brits that the empire is over. Somebody needs to tell the Swedes, the Danes, the Nordics, and the Finns, the Vikings may be in your DNA, but it ain't in your current capabilities. And the little Baltics, like those little chihuahuas that just yip, yip, yip, yip, yip. And so, you know, there's a meme about them opening a door next.

You've been at this huge dog, and all of a sudden the little chihuahua chills out. That's what needs to happen, frankly, because they're living in denial. I get all the big talk and all the fear talk in order to justify the continued concentration of power in Europe. They're overthrowing and undermining elections. The fact that right out of the gate, Vice President Vance goes over there right after Trump's inauguration and says, whatever you do, don't try to overthrow and undermine elections like in Romania. And what do they do a month later? They overthrow and undermine the elections in Romania. They did the same in Moldova.

They did the same heavily in Hungary, a longtime ally of the President of the United States, in Orban. So at some point, there has to be a recognition and realization of what President Trump himself said in early 2016, in the primary stage. He said maybe it's time to just get out of NATO. It is long overdue we get out of NATO. NATO's only existence was predicated on a Warsaw Pact existing with the Soviet Union. It was to justify defense against an expansionistic Soviet Union. That may have always been a lie about an expansionistic Soviet Union, but that was the belief at the time. It no longer serves any purpose, and they've been coming up with lame pretext after lame pretext to keep the grift going.

Now, I think that's still half of the equation, that it's all about those generals and those ex-generals and military and political officials who want to fall upwards and get big, fat contracts and nice European deals, and they want to stay there for those reasons. But there's no reason for us to have any U.S. military bases in Europe. I get the concern is, and even Russia has this concern, that a complete absence of the U.S. presence from the European continent may trigger rearmament of Germany, may trigger fractious relations and the return to military conflict that unfortunately the European continent has been so well known for, more than any other continent historically, over an extended time period for war between themselves and expansionistic outwards.

But I think economically, how are they going to do it? You look at who can fuel themselves, what countries can fuel themselves, what countries can feed themselves. Those are the countries that can arm themselves and defend themselves. That's Russia. That's the United States. Not a lot of other countries can feed and fuel themselves, that are fuel and food self-sufficient. And those countries can arm themselves. China is creating a situation where they can approximate that with their

relationships with Russia and being the manufacturing engine of the world, which we helped facilitate with the World Trade Organization deal in 1999, and then facilitated even further by the Bush administration. It was a bipartisan screwover of Midwestern America.

The president was supposed to reverse it, and instead he hasn't, because, well, let's not offend the Israel lobby and the big tech oligarchs. So I think we should get out of NATO. I was greatly hopeful we'd get out of NATO. I don't care how we get out of NATO, just that we get out of NATO. NATO shouldn't exist. It's a threat. It's a threat to peace. What was supposed to be a preservation of peace has become a threat to peace. Now, speaking to the timeframe between 2021 and 2026, it's only grown weaker. But it's a little dog that just keeps yipping, yipping, yipping louder and louder and louder. And that's why, unfortunately, I think Russia, for the sake of the peace of the world, needs to show off its deterrent capability to put the little dog back in its box.

So it will quit yipping in ways that could trigger—I mean, Europe has a better capability of triggering a world war by accident than any other continent on the planet. They've already proven it, World War I. So why go back to that? So I think our best chances are to get the heck out of there. I don't think Trump is going to be willing or able to do so, despite his prior promises to do so at some level. I think if Vance would ever become president, I think you would see a de-escalation and deceleration of our presence in Asia and in Europe, and our military boys brought back home rather than the 800-plus bases we've got all over the world. The reminder is we can't defend anybody against anything if we can't defend little Qatar against Iran.

So, you know, I mean, that illusion is gone. That bubble's been popped. When Ukraine falls, and it ultimately will fall, and probably sooner rather than later in terms of the next 12 to 18 months, that will pop another bubble of European illusion and delusion. And as Europe suffers from not being able to afford food and not being able to import fuel, as Germany gets its continued deindustrialization, I don't see how Europe rearms. It can talk about rearming. Maybe it can build drones, lots of drones, maybe some robots. I think some of that's exaggerated and overrated in terms of the robotic side of the equation. But there's no military—no country has been able to build up a great military that has serious food and fuel problems and is as deindustrialized as Europe.

So I think it's mostly a grift. It's like the Ukrainian military arms machine, where 90 percent of the money never goes to the front line. It goes to somebody here, somebody over there. Somebody gets their skim. Somebody over here gets their skim. I think that's what the European rearmament will end up being. And if they're nice and kind and find ways to have a rapprochement with Russia, maybe they'll still be there in the same form 50 years from now. But if they don't, they may get the consequence they keep getting scared of by provoking it from Russia and being an afterthought, being someplace you go and visit for its ruins. That's the future of Europe as we speak.

#Nima

I think Europe is just facing dismal days. Thank you. Thank you so much, Robert, for being with us today. Great pleasure to have you on, and see you soon.

#Robert

Absolutely. Great fun. Glad to be here.

#Nima

Thank you. Bye bye.