

# Russia Goes After NATO Centers in Kiev, Iran Winning Big | Larry C. Johnson

Updates on the Ukraine-Proxy War and the Iran War with Larry C. Johnson: Both wars are about to get worse as NATO is trying to expand the fight into Russia. Moscow will now escalate in Kiev to send final message to Collective West. At the same time, the global economic shock from the Iran War will only grow deeper and more intensive with every day. Links: Larry Johnson Sonar21: <https://sonar21.com> Larry Johnson Substack: <https://larrycjohnson.substack.com> Counter Currents YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/@counter\\_currents\\_channel](https://www.youtube.com/@counter_currents_channel) Larry Johnson Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/user?u=80288936> Larry Johnson Buy Me a Coffee: <https://buymeacoffee.com/lcjohnson1M> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Russia's New War Phase 00:06:52 From Attrition To Escalation 00:14:18 US Role And Ukraine Air Defense 00:24:19 Russia's Endgame In Ukraine 00:28:10 Trump, Ukraine And Iran 00:29:04 Abraham Accords And Gulf Talks 00:33:20 US Bases And New Gulf Security 00:37:33 Sanctions And Diplomacy With Iran 00:43:10 Lebanon, Oil And Wider War Risks 00:46:11 China, Commodities And Market Collapse

## #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. Today, again, with the one and only Larry Johnson.

## #Larry C. Johnson

Larry: Hi there. Thank you, Pascal.

## #Pascal

Well, thank you. A lot has been happening over the last week when it comes to Russia and Iran, and both of these things don't seem to be going well, especially what is happening now with Russia, with Ukraine having basically killed all these teenagers in Lugansk, and the Russians not taking it anymore, now having issued even a warning that foreign diplomats in Kyiv should evacuate. Do you think the Russian approach to the war is now going to change?

## #Larry C. Johnson

Yes. I think this is a watershed moment. They've made the decision to change. They haven't yet fully acted on it. You know, we got the hint that it was moving in this direction about three weeks

ago, or was it four weeks ago, when Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky appeared on Danny Davis's podcast and commented that, you know, basically, targets in Europe were on the table now because of the drone attacks that were taking place inside Russia. That was followed up two, three days later by Sergei Ryabkov, the deputy foreign minister. And, you know, I know Dmitry.

I spent some time with him. He was sort of my host when I spoke to the United Nations Security Council. And then Sergei Ryabkov, I first met him back in December of 2023. It was a small 12-person seminar. I was there with Alastair Crooke and Pepe Escobar. And so, Sergei Ryabkov is a very serious diplomat. And he reiterated the same message that Ambassador Polyansky had delivered. So that told me right off the bat, because, you know, Dmitry is not the kind of guy who's going to go out and just start spouting off, "Yeah, man, we're going to go kick some European ass."

## **#Pascal**

You know, that's not him.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

What he said was measured, but it was direct. And it was clear that he was acting on instructions that had been provided from the foreign ministry. And then finally, we get the readout from this week's conversation between Senator LeRolph, the foreign minister, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio. It was not what I'd call a happy conversation. You know, LeRolph is very direct. And warning, you know, the Russian readout contained this. The U.S. readout didn't say a thing, but it was saying, Western diplomats, get out of Kiev. Russia does not make idle threats. As Raymond Governe, who spent many, many years studying and analyzing the Russians with his job at the CIA, said, if you want to know what the Russians are going to do, just listen to what they say. Because they're not notorious bullshitters. They're very direct.

They can be diplomatic. But in this case, we have to take very, very seriously what's being said. And what they're signaling is they're going to attack intelligence and military targets in Kiev that are currently, I think, staffed with Westerners — U.S. CIA personnel and military personnel, both NATO and U.S. So, and I believe this is one, you know, people say, well, why hadn't they attacked this before? Why now? Well, this latest terrorist attack against civilians — and that's what it was — whoever uses violence in killing civilians, that's the very definition of terrorism. And it's worth noting that despite this incredibly massive, massive Russian retaliation in Kiev, I don't think they killed any civilians. So, you know, they were taking care to inflict damage on the military and intelligence infrastructure.

## **#Pascal**

So the numbers they published right after it happened, the morning after, were four people. That is not confirmed, but that is what was said from their side. And Carlos actually then on Twitter said,

like, this is pure terrorism. They are intending to kill. It's a genocide. They're intending to kill as many as they can, which is, I mean, it's another level of stupid, but that's what came out of the West.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yeah, well, all we can say is, if that was really Russia's intention, they're really bad at it, you know.

## **#Pascal**

Especially you and the Russians, right, in densely populated areas and not managing to kill people at least in the two digits. Yeah, you are really, really, really, really bad at your game. But okay, how do we read that then? Because what I hear from you is that Russia saying "take out your diplomats" actually is Russia saying "take out these people in Kiev who we know are responsible for killing our people. And if you don't take them out, we will take them out."

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yeah. Well, just tell them to, particularly the Westerners, get out of town because Russia is going — they are going to hit Kiev and keep hitting it in preparation for taking it with a ground force. I think they are going to capture and control Kiev maybe by the end of the summer. You know, one of the reasons I think that they never in the past carried out this kind of attack was they didn't want to risk, you know, killing Westerners and then escalating the conflict to, you know, they might say, okay, this is an Article 5 violation that Russia was simply not prepared to take on.

Now they're ready. I think they made sure they got ample supplies of missiles ready, and artillery and soldiers. They boosted their numbers. So I think that's why they're now upping the game. And it's not just Dmitry Polyansky; it was Sergei Karaganov as well who made comments about using nukes against Europe. So the war, it's entered a whole new phase now. I don't know if they're going to rename it, but it's going beyond special military operations.

## **#Pascal**

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's [pascallottaz.substack.com](https://pascallottaz.substack.com). The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. What caused that? Because in my reading, the last four years had these different phases. The first phase was Russia trying to do a surprise, a bad surprise for Ukraine, to force them to come to a neutrality agreement for Ukraine at the negotiating table. They almost had them there. The virus blew in, blew it up, said, go and fight. The Russians basically had to make do with how they could, a retreat in order to regroup.

And then from there on, ever since 2023, they were basically for three years in a war of attrition where they said, sure, okay, you, Ukraine and NATO, throw at us what you have, we'll destroy it, we demilitarize you that way, and we go slowly and methodically. And from the Russian side, they wanted to keep up the fiction that it's just a military operation. And the West wanted to keep up the fiction that this is just them helping Ukraine. But the implicit agreement was, we keep it in Ukraine, right? Whenever there was a danger that it would spill over, actually both sides dialed it down. And that seems to have been kind of, for different reasons, the approach. But it seems that the Europeans are now salami-slicing themselves into trying to take the war to Russia proper without the war coming to their territory. And Russia is not going to take that, right? Are you reading it the same way?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yeah, you know, you're exactly right. And let's compare and contrast the leadership in Russia with public opinion and the leadership in the United States with public opinion with respect to war. Vladimir Putin, you could argue, has always been a little behind public opinion. In fact, he's not been out trying to rally public opinion to, "Let's step it up," you know. He's always been more cautious, whereas the average Russians have been more willing to be more aggressive. And it's reflected, you know, in comments by Dmitry Medvedev, as an example, and Sergei Karaganov. Both are, you know, both are well-respected and are serious people in Russia.

Well, now Putin is stepping out because it was clear that what Lavrov said was at the orders of Vladimir Putin. Putin told him, you call that Marco Rubio character, and this is what you tell him. And the same message had been delivered to Ryabkov and to Dmitry Polyansky. So, do you remember the musician Alice Cooper? '70s, '80s in the United States—was before your time. But he had a song called "No More Mr. Nice Guy." And that's Putin now. No more Mr. Nice Guy. Russia's turned a corner in this war, and I expect them to fully execute this and basically make Kyiv unlivable for foreign diplomats and foreign military personnel and former intelligence officers.

## **#Pascal**

I mean, them now saying we're going to dial it up against Kyiv is actually, in my reading, also a way to tell the Europeans, look, this is the last thing we do inside Ukraine. If you don't stop it here, then the next thing is going to be outside of Ukraine. So... Plus, when it comes to this thing, like chasing out not only the diplomats but also the NGOs and the foreign command center and so on, while basically forcing the Ukrainians to keep government structures and everything in Kyiv, it's probably going to create quite a headache. But do you see any chance that the government itself and the military structures will retreat to Lviv or something like that?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Eventually, I think that's what will happen. And, you know, you astutely noted the critical point. Instead of, you know, because when both Ambassador Polyansky and Sergei Ryabkov, the Deputy Foreign Minister, first spoke about going after Europe, in my mind, I'm thinking, okay, they're going to start targeting European cities. This is a way where they can hit European targets in Ukraine. It is, you know, an intermediate step before going to full escalation. Again, giving them a chance to back off, get out of the way, save yourselves.

And, you know, it looks like it's had some effects. Both Starmer and Macron have been a little less belligerent of late. It's, you know, this is like the small dog phenomenon. Have you ever been around, you know, a really big, powerful dog? It usually doesn't need to bark at you. It just intimidates the hell out of you by being there. It's those little yappy dogs that, you know, all they're doing, they're an annoyance. That's Kaja Kallas. You know, that's von der Leyen, or as I call her, Fond of Lying. You know, they're making the belligerent threats, but they have no means to carry out or execute on those threats.

## **#Pascal**

So, I mean, even if this new phase of the war remains inside Ukraine, it seems to me that the Europeans are dead set on still going ahead with their preparations for a war with Russia. And if we listen to all of the talks we've had on these different shows, including with Glenn Diesen and so on, we see that the Russians now seem to start to agree that, okay, this war will come. So we're going to get ready for it. Are we already inside a self-fulfilling prophecy at this point?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

No, because it's one thing for Europe to talk. It's another thing for it to do. And that is the saving grace. They're good at talking stuff, not real good at action. And when push comes to shove, remember Starmer was talking about, we're going to intercept all these Russian ghost ships that are carrying gas or oil. Well, the Russians show up with one of their battleships or destroyers, and it's parked off the coast of the UK, and Starmer says, ah, never mind, we're not going to do that. And so if it was left just to the leaders... yeah, they could be a self-fulfilling prophecy, but they're not the only ones to get a say in this. And the public at large in these various countries are, I think, ultimately going to restrain their leaders from committing suicide.

## **#Pascal**

Well, I would hope so. But what's the role now of the United States? I mean, it's a really, really bizarre moment where the U.S. still pretends to be a neutral mediator, while everybody agrees that the United States is the kingpin in the decision-making process in NATO, which ultimately trickles all the way down into Kyiv, right? What's the position at the moment of the U.S.?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

U.S., Ukraine—are you familiar with the expression “the redheaded stepchild”? Yes. So, in sort of U. S. culture, if a family adopted a kid, they called him the redheaded stepchild. He wasn’t the favorite. He wasn’t part of the inner family. He’s always treated as an outsider. That’s what Ukraine is now with respect to the United States—the redheaded stepchild. Because the favorite son, Israel, they’re getting all the love, all the money, all the weapons. And Ukraine’s getting nothing. And, you know, it’s really—there’s also a lot of self-deceit between them, both the West and in Ukraine. Zelensky wrote this letter to Trump complaining about, “We need more Patriot missiles. We need more air defense.” Ukraine started getting their first batch of Patriot missiles, PAC-3s, in 2023. And so 2023, 2024, into early 2025, they received a grand total of like 950.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

PAC-3 missiles. Now, do the math. So if you've got an inbound Russian missile—ballistic, cruise, or even a Geran drone—you're going to have to fire two of those PAC-3s at that incoming missile. So just do a search on one of the AI engines and ask the question, how many missiles has Russia fired since 2023? And ballistic, cruise—I didn't even ask about drones—numbers between 8,000 and 12,000. So do the math. If you've got 950, that means you can shoot at 475 missiles. And if you do that, you've exhausted your supply of PAC-3s. And they're shooting down 90% of 8,000 to 12,000 missiles.

Please, you know, stop lying. They don't. The point is, Ukraine has hardly had any air defense system now for more than two years. And, you know, they always put a happy face on it, claiming, oh yeah, we shot down X amount. They haven't. And the sad part of this is they can beg the United States all they want for more PAC-3 missiles. The United States produces an average of about 60 a month, okay? Which means they can take out 30, potentially take out 30 missiles. Well, where's the priority? The priority with Israel or with Ukraine? The priority is Israel.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, obviously Israel. But on the other hand, it seems to me that Ukraine, probably independently, has learned a very similar lesson, or is taking a similar lesson, from something that Iran has been preparing for for a while—the fact that you cannot avoid being hit, but you can maintain the capacity to strike back. And they figured out, actually, you know, the whole Patriot system and so on—I think that's just money laundering, mostly. Because right now what hurts Russia is these cheap drones that the Ukrainians manage to fire, or the NATO alliance manages to fire, into Russia. And the Russians also are vulnerable to those. So, I mean, kind of, you know, we are at the point where both sides—and actually also in the Iran war—both sides are left with only the option of trying to absorb these shocks. And it's usually the larger power that is more sensitive to being hit themselves.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

I disagree for this reason. One, most of the drones that are fired into Russia are shot down. Russia still has a very ample and effective air defense system. A few get through, and they cause some damage, but damage on what scale? Let's remember, in size comparison, and even in size comparison with Iran, Ukraine is roughly one-third the size of Iran in terms of landmass. And when you look at all of the 8,000 to 12,000 ballistic and cruise missiles over a four-year period—no telling how many, I'd say easily 20,000 to 30,000 drones—even with all that firepower spread out over Ukraine, it still hasn't hollowed out the society. It is reducing it by attrition. Ukraine, for its part, doesn't even come close to that kind of firepower. Their only real firepower now is they may have some Storm Shadows, and they've got some drones.

Now, they're getting a fairly significant resupply of drones from the U.K., but then that makes the U. K. now a target based on what Lavrov announced the other day. So, from the Russian standpoint, you know, they're pursuing a military plan. It doesn't fit within any of the Western models of how we think we should do warfare, even though the West has these plans. But look how poorly they've performed over the last 66 years. You know, we don't have to look at just one case. We've got multiple cases. Well, let's go to the Korean War. The U.S. failed to defeat North Korea and China in the Korean War, failed to defeat Vietnam, and then all these other scattershot wars. We, quote, defeated Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War, even though, you know, looking back on it, that was a war that never should have happened.

Because Saddam was a client of the United States. Iraq had been supported, funded, armed, and equipped by the United States during its war with Iran. And then, in a little over, like, less than a year, year and a half, the United States turned with a vengeance on Saddam Hussein. You've got to look back at that moment. You know, that war was so unnecessary. And I, you know, looking back, I didn't realize back then what I understand today, what I know today, because then I viewed that, you know, I hadn't followed the history of the Iran-Iraq war. I didn't realize the United States had been supplying the chemical and biological weapons and providing the intelligence that Iraq was using to attack Iran.

I just said, hey, here's this Saddam guy, out of the blue, attacks Kuwait. I didn't really understand that Saddam had met with the U.S. Ambassador, April Glaspie, and said, hey, these Kuwaitis are stealing our oil, so I'm going to go in and stop it. Do you have a problem with that? And April said to him, the U.S. has no position on that. And he said, okay. And remember, this is the guy who had been interacting with CIA and U.S. Department of Defense assets for almost 10 years. So he thought, hey, Americans, I've got a decent relationship with them. Little did he understand that he was still the redheaded stepchild.

Favorite son, Israel, was still at the forefront and was one of the major justifications, or at least motivations, for the United States to do that attack in 1990 to drive him out of Kuwait. So this is, you know, the United States militarily has failed. And that's the other thing, I think, the revelation for Russia out of this whole, you know, it's one thing to do an intelligence assessment, but then it's

another thing to see how it actually plays out on the battlefield. Scott Ritter and I had a brief disagreement in the summer of 2022 when the United States first introduced some of its 155-millimeter artillery and one of the earlier short-range missiles.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

And Scott said at the time he thought that was a game changer, and I said, no, it's not.

## **#Pascal**

This doesn't alter the course.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

But now we're at a stage where what we're going to see the Russians do will be a game changer. It will fundamentally change the nature of the war. And it's going to, because, you know, now Russia realizes the United States is effectively a paper tiger. It can cause some damage, but the United States has been unable to defeat the Houthis, and now it's been unable to defeat Iran, and all of its so-called wunderwaffen, you know, the wonder weapons supplied to Ukraine, have failed to put a dent in Russia's military and industrial capability.

## **#Pascal**

All of that is true. The thing I worry about is what can be the endgame from the Russian side? Because, I mean, it's... If I was one of these sick neocons somewhere in D.C., then I... And we know they talk about it like this, right? Hillary Clinton said, like, let's make Ukraine the Afghanistan of Russia at the beginning of the war. She said that literally. I mean, poor Afghanistan. I mean, invaded by two great powers over the course of, like, 40, 50 years. But anyhow... I mean, seriously, poor guys. But they would want to make this a quagmire, right? And a quagmire can be a war that, well, you can win with overwhelming power, or you can be much stronger than the other one, but you can't win it. Because they will then support these insurgents and small weapons and keep hurting, keep hurting, keep hurting. Until after years, you know, it shatters at some point. How would Russia prevent that? Because these drone strikes into Russia are already designed to do that, right? It's this way of pinpricks that over time stack up.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Well, Russia actually has a successful track record in dealing with insurgencies, Western-backed insurgencies. You know, the first one was in the aftermath of World War II, going into 1949–1950, and the CIA and MI6 were busy with Banderites, putting together Ukrainian units that were to carry out attacks in Russia. It took the Russians then about six years to quell that. Then let's jump ahead to the 1990s. You had the first Chechen War, '92–'93. But then the second one, that was begun in

earnest in August—I think the date was August 9th, 1999—and that went on for about 11 years. It ended in 2010 when Medvedev was president. So Russia has successfully fought insurgencies, Western-backed insurgencies, and defeated them. And the defeat in the Second Chechen War was—was it a brutal war? Oh, absolutely. You know, the Russians killed a lot of people.

But when it was all over, they had the loyalty of the Muslim population in Chechnya. And I can testify to that just based on my conversations with General Apti Alaudinov. You know, he's a Hero of Russia, but he's a devout Muslim. And he fought, he was involved with those as a very young man, a teenager, in that second Chechen war. So Russia is—they're continuing this war of attrition, bleeding out Ukraine. But on top of it, I think, you know, what we're going to see is they will take—Russia will take Kyiv, or Kiev, you know, however we want to pronounce it—and they will take Odessa and probably Transnistria. Before this is all over, they will militarily defeat Ukrainian forces. And if any NATO forces try to go in and defend Odessa, they'll be wiped out. And it's going to be Russia. It'll be brutal. But that's where I see what Russia is prepared to do.

### **#Pascal**

So at the moment, we are still—I mean, we're again at the point where probably the Russians still, at this moment, want to keep the war inside Ukraine. Right? The Ukrainians still want to Europeanize this. The Europeans would also like to Europeanize it. So it will probably boil down to the decision of Washington which way it will go.

### **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yeah, Trump will not get further involved with Ukraine. I'm pretty confident of that. He's too caught up in Iran. You know, the United States, we've already got very limited military operations there. And he's suffering a political beating right now. His popularity, it's at the same level as Richard Nixon in his second term. And remember, Nixon in his second term was in the midst of Watergate. Sixty-three percent of Americans opposed him. And that's where Trump is right now. He's only got 37% saying they support Trump.

### **#Pascal**

Yeah, and the Iran war really, really damaged his entire MAGA base. And he's not getting out of it, apparently. What did you make of... Let's now switch to Iran. What did you make of this comment two days ago when he said that he talked to all of these leaders in West Asia, including Turkey, and they all... They must join the peace agreement, which is basically also signing the Abraham Accords and recognizing Israel, including Pakistan and all this. It's like... If I wanted to make sure that there would be no agreement, that's exactly how I would do it. And we have no precedent in history where neutral states, uninvolved neutrals, were forced to become part of the peace agreement.

### **#Larry C. Johnson**

I mean, what is that idea? Yeah, well, the reports are that when he brought that up, he had all these people on a conference call. And when he brought that up, there was dead silence. Nobody spoke up and said, yeah, Mr. President, that's a great idea. Yeah, well, let's do that. Is something like the Abraham Accords possible? Yes, I think under one scenario. That scenario would be: Israel must grant statehood to the Palestinians. They must be secure. Israel has withdrawn its military forces back to the appropriate boundaries.

And then, and only then, would these other nations be willing to entertain recognizing Israel as a sovereign state. As long as they continue to fight the wars and attack Lebanon and attack the Palestinians, there will be no Abraham Agreement. And the Saudis made that very clear. The next day, they released a statement saying, no, not going to happen until the rights of the Palestinian people are addressed. Same thing out of Qatar and same thing out of Iran. So, you know, you're right, it looks as if Trump's maybe trying to deliberately sabotage his own peace effort. But that's not going anywhere.

## **#Pascal**

Or is he fighting an internal fight with all of the neocons, the Lindsey Grahams and so on, and Pompeo? I mean, they all came out last week when Trump announced a deal was near, and they all came out and said, like, no, no, no, no, no, no deal. I mean, this is horrible because of our ally Israel, and now he just floats out this idea in order to throw them a bone. Is it something like that?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yeah, well, as you correctly note, the social media accounts with the Zionist crowd went wild. And again, today we saw Trump said things that someone who is in touch with White House sources wrote and said, look, Trump has once again pulled the plug on a peace agreement by his, you know, statements that Iran's not going to remain in control of the Strait of Hormuz, and just insisting that the Abraham Accord must be upheld. So, I know the Pakistanis, they've got the lead role in these negotiations, trying to, you know, patch together an agreement, right? They've got the full backing of China, and China and Russia are both involved in diplomatic pressure on the Gulf Arabs.

Now, just before coming on air, I got a report from somebody who is involved with the negotiations from the Chinese side. And they report that Qatar has now informed the United States, basically, you've got six to nine months, get the hell out of Qatar, which means closing Al Udeid Air Force Base, which is the largest. It is the brain center for all U.S. military operations in West Asia. I'm actually surprised Iran didn't inflict more damage on it during the first five weeks of the war. And that may have been because, remember, it's a complicated relationship between Iran and Qatar. A few years back, Qatar was isolated.

It was facing attack from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and they were actually preventing the arrival of even humanitarian supplies. Well, who supplied Qatar during that time?

Iran. So the Qataris are not a bunch of ingrates. They remember that. And so this is why, you know, in fact, Dala Ilama, the speaker of the parliament, was in Qatar. And I don't know who he specifically met with, but I'm sure it was with the leaders. So Iran is this whole new security architecture. They're trying, they're working to put that together. And what that means is the exclusion of the United States from West Asia.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, and they're probably going to get there because also Saudi Arabia now already blocked the United States twice, Qatar as well. And I think we recently actually understood, you know, we had this discussion earlier and we were looking at Oman. Oman has no significant bases or anything but still got attacked. And by now we know, because Araghchi said that these attacks were not intentional but because they have this mosaic defense where 31 independent military governorates basically take decisions, that some of them, you know, struck places that maybe the highest leadership wouldn't have wanted to see. But it seems that by now the message actually to the Gulf states is getting through, right? You need to kick out the Americans. So the negotiations are probably just as hard with the Gulf states as they are with the United States in order to create new facts on the ground.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Correct. Yeah, that, you know, this is not an overnight process. And there are still the Pakistanis working at the direction of the Chinese who want to ensure that they get this new security architecture in place, that basically it will be the Gulf states and Iran guaranteeing their own security as a group. And so the one problem child in this whole lash-up is the United Arab Emirates. And even within the Emiratis, it's not all of the Emirates. It's basically the guy, MBZ, who I believe is in—what is the other—it's not Dubai, the other main city in the UAE? Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi. Yeah, I think that's his main thing, where he hangs his hat. So this is a work in progress. But as we came on air, I see that there were new clashes tonight over Bandar Abbas.

So this may still get back into a heated exchange. It looks like Foreign Minister Araghchi went to Moscow yesterday. The Kremlin hasn't highlighted it. I'm assuming it was Araghchi. It may have been the Minister of Defense. The Russians so far haven't issued any readout on that kind of meeting. So I'm sure it's the negotiations and talks about what, you know, what could Iran be suggesting. Iran said, OK, look, we'll give up the original uranium provided that you, Russia, store it. There was also talk that Pakistan would store it. And then Trump would say, no, that couldn't happen. But, you know, for Iran, it's a red line. The United States is not going to tell Iran what it can do with its enriched uranium. Iran will make that decision.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, on the other hand, Iran wants things that only the United States can give. I mean, the military is one thing. Iran can maybe chase them away from the Gulf, yes. But the other thing is, of course, sanctions relief and the end of this blockade. And that is something that's actually in the hands of the U.S. So there is an interest in coming to some form of understanding that then would produce results, right?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

But the... Well, let me just add, you can make the case that who's hurting most from the blockade? Iran or the Gulf Arabs? I would argue it's the Gulf Arabs. Why? Because while there are some limitations or attempts to limit what Iran can ship out via the ports in the Persian Gulf, they've still got open trade routes to the north over the Caspian Sea with Russia, as well as Azerbaijan. They've got land routes through Tashkent, including the railroad connecting them to China, as well as China's ability to fly cargo planes in with goods, as well as seven land routes from Pakistan with Pakistan's full cooperation. So Iran is actually, they're actually in pretty good shape economically. These dire predictions that, oh, we do the blockade, it's going to choke their economy, they're going to collapse, didn't happen. So, you know, all these predictions from these Western pundits turned out to be false.

## **#Pascal**

If possible, it would, of course, be better for the Iranian economy as well to have this thing lifted and the sanctions lifted, and to actually, you know, do much more. So this would be a good thing. On the other hand, social media is, in my view, ruining a lot of this diplomatic process, because whatever Donald Trump throws out then becomes a huge thing. On the other hand, though, what is your gut feeling? I mean, is there actual diplomacy going on behind all of this, of actual Iranian diplomats and U.S. diplomats saying, like, don't pay attention to it, the actual thing between us happens here at this table in Pakistan? Or are they also always afraid of looking at what Donald Trump tweeted out yesterday?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

The Iranians, I think, they don't pay any attention to what Donald Trump tweets. But they're not willing to make an agreement based solely on a promise that says, oh yeah, we cross our heart and hope to die. Well, if you do these things, we'll lift those sanctions. Iran is simply going to say, wait a second, we've been there. We've been down this road with the JCPOA. You made commitments and you didn't fulfill those commitments. So we've got to have something ironclad, something very concrete.

## **#Pascal**

Can Trump lift the sanctions, or is it actually Congress? If it has to go to Congress, it will all be sunk, right?

### **#Larry C. Johnson**

Well, it depends. Sanctions that were imposed via executive order, Trump can lift. Whether it was George W. Bush or Barack Obama or Joe Biden that imposed those sanctions, if it was done via executive order, Trump can lift them. If it was done via an act of Congress, then you're correct. Congress has to meet and approve the lifting. So that, again, could be a negotiating point where Iran might say, okay, you, President Trump, lift all the sanctions that you can lift, and then we'll be willing to go forward and talk. But, you know, Iran's not going to surrender its sovereignty. That's the key lesson, I think.

### **#Pascal**

No, but the thing is, what can Iran— I mean, having any form of agreement, the other side needs to live up to it, right? So what do you think about the UN sanctions? Would it be on the cards that they force Trump to order his ambassador in the Security Council to actually, you know, propose a resolution that would lift the UN sanctions on Iran?

### **#Larry C. Johnson**

That would be a big one. Yeah, the U.S. could play a decisive role in that, but you still have France and England, or the United Kingdom. So they could still veto it. And so this is—and, in fact, we saw them—basically, they did so last September. So the blowback sanctions, or the—snapback. Yeah, the snapback. You know, the U.K. and France were key ones and said, no, we're going to keep those in place. So what's interesting, though, is both France and the United Kingdom now, they're an anachronism with respect to the U.N. You could make the case at the end of World War II they could still be sort of considered a global power group. They are no longer. They're weak regional powers at best. Yet they're still, you know, living out their own fantasy life, that they're still important, that they're still relevant, and they aren't.

### **#Pascal**

Yeah, but once a treaty gives you something, then the states tend to keep it until the very end. Anything else, in your view, that's currently happening around Iran that is very important to properly assess the situation?

### **#Larry C. Johnson**

Well, the other is what happens in Lebanon. Israel has renewed its offensive in southern Lebanon, and they're bombing. And Israel, at the same time, they're suffering significant losses. Hezbollah,

with its access to these drones, it's been a bit of a game changer for them. In the past, they had to hide and ambush to attack Israeli forces as they advanced, and there was much more likelihood of casualties with that. Now they're hitting them, they're causing more casualties to Israel using the drones than they ever did in the 2006 war with, you know, up-close and personal, you know, fighting in close quarters.

So that, you know, that is another factor that's going to play in. And so far, we're told that Trump warned Bibi not to bomb Beirut and to stop, you know, so he can bomb around the yellow line in the south, but do not go north of the Litani River. So apparently Israel has been following that so far. But if they expand the war, that will be, from the standpoint of Iran, breaking the ceasefire. And then Israel will become another target for Iran.

### **#Pascal**

Right, right. Overall, the situation doesn't look very conducive toward this being toned down anytime soon, which also means that the entire economic problem around the Strait of Hormuz will also remain in place, which means that we should all get ready for even higher prices at the pump.

### **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yeah, the global effect of this economically is only starting to be felt. But the price of oil and gasoline, for example, and diesel fuel is soaring around the world. So it's not just an isolated area. China is, you know, despite U.S. hopes that the blockade would somehow pressure China, it's turned out that's not the case at all. It's just the opposite. China has built in some insurance policies for itself, and it's largely immune to the blockade and these sanctions.

### **#Pascal**

Yeah, and what it also will lead to is, of course, Iran and China trying to figure out alternative routes. And, you know, every shock also incentivizes the others to improve resilience. So, last question: do we have any indications that these neocon crazies are planning something to expand this war to China? I mean, at the moment, it seems quiet here in the Pacific. Yeah. Do you see anything on your end?

### **#Larry C. Johnson**

No. They might want to, but the U.S. doesn't have the means to do so. They've already largely depleted much of what they would have to use in an offensive against Chinese forces. And the Chinese are far, far more capable than Iran, with hypersonic missiles, anti-ship missiles, submarines. So there's no way for the United States really to inflict any kind of, well, damage short of using

nuclear weapons. And, you know, if they do that, then, you know, the end of the world's upon us because Russia and China would strike back at the United States if the U.S. decided to do that. So I don't see that happening. But let me ask you a question as a historian.

Have we ever had a period in the last 300 years where five critical commodities for world industrial output have been cut off? So you've had 20% of the world's oil cut off, 10% of the world's liquid natural gas cut off, 35% of the world's urea, essential for fertilizer production among other things, cut off, 44% of the helium that is used in medical imaging as well as building computer chips, that's gone, and then sulfur, which is essential to create sulfuric acid, which is again a very important commodity within industrial activity. I don't recall, I don't think we've ever had a period like that. And the implications for global economic recession at a minimum, depression very likely.

## **#Pascal**

I don't think we had it on a global scale the way we have it today. But unfortunately, usually this is one of the goals or the implications of large-scale warfare. I mean, this was Napoleon's idea of how to deal with the Brits, and the British idea of how to deal with Napoleon is like you cut each other off from your trading partners and you start threatening third parties, neutrals, to stop trading with the enemy, right? So it's a natural thing to happen in this kind of war conflagration, but I don't think we had it on that scale on a planetary level yet. Yeah.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

So that's why I said we're living through something that has no precedent in history. And it's not like, you know, if you have a historical event, you can go back and say, okay, this is what happened previously. What are the different variables we're looking at? We're looking at something entirely new. And that's why I think the vast majority of people, even academics and pundits and experts in other areas, I don't think they fully grasp how serious this is and how disruptive it's going to be. And that economic disruption, I think, will end up playing a very— as time goes on, that will become the more important factor leading to incentives to actually bring an end to this war and to the negotiated settlement that will convince Iran, okay, you win, we're going to stop this.

## **#Pascal**

If, and looking at the development of what the central banks are doing at the moment, and how the bond market is developing, it looks possible if another 2008 hits, that would change the entire equation. And one more shock, one more economic shock that's related but also significantly different from what's going on. So we'll see about that, I guess.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Well, there's a derivatives trader who lives in China, a Canadian named Alex White. He has a channel on YouTube called ReporterFi Media. And he says the derivatives market right now is between \$700 trillion and \$1 quadrillion—numbers that, you know, you can't get your mind around. And he thinks a collapse in that market is very, very likely, which would make 2008 appear to be a picnic compared to the kind of economic chaos that would sweep the world. So that's why, I mean, if we get into that stage again, we're going to be in something that will be profoundly shattering to the global political order.

## **#Pascal**

Derivatives are such a stupid idea, especially the split-up ones. I mean, that's what screwed up 2008.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Well, it's just...

## **#Pascal**

A couple of debt obligations, you slice them up, you put them into a new package, you sell that, and then nobody knows what you actually own, and you call that a foolproof asset and collateralized risk. My God, is that a dumb thing to do?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yeah, and you think we learned? Nope. Flat learning curve here, man. So this is, you know, that's another thing that's on the horizon that I don't think a lot of policy analysts are taking into account.

## **#Pascal**

All right. Now that we're thoroughly back into doom and gloom, I would like to thank you, Larry, for a very good analysis—an important one. If people want to follow you, they should go to your homepage, [sonar21.com](http://sonar21.com). Yes. Anywhere else they should find you?

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yeah, I have a weekly broadcast on Countercurrents. In fact, I just interviewed Alex White today. It'll be out probably on Friday. I did it with Catherine Austin Fitts last week. Again, she had some very interesting economic analysis. She was a trader on Wall Street and a very experienced trader. And she's got, you know, I think the whole economic side—economics can be boring—but that's where I think the real panic will come from. Because the markets right now, the markets are not acting normally. You know, we saw prices of oil during COVID surge to \$150 a barrel, and that was on the futures market. But there was only a cutoff of 20% of the supply. The supply basically

remained intact. Now we've got 20% of the supply gone, and they're saying, oh yeah, the price of oil is falling because we think a peace agreement is near. I don't think a peace agreement is near, despite all the press coverage and positive comments.

## **#Pascal**

No, but that's the funny thing about the market. They don't need something real; they need something to believe in, right? It just shows that it's a casino. It's a huge casino.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

Yes, but some people really play it.

## **#Pascal**

And one of the main players is the President of the United States. But now, who knows? Yeah. How to create belief. Anyhow, Larry Johnson, we will have you back pretty soon. Everybody, go to Sonar21, support Larry. Please also keep in mind, YouTube banned Larry. He's not allowed to have his own channel anymore, which is horrible. So if you can, support him there. Also on, I think, Buy Me a Coffee, right? Yeah, Buy Me a Coffee, Patreon, Substack.

## **#Larry C. Johnson**

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