

# John Helmer: Iran's Unthinkable Move Triggers US & Israel

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## #Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Tuesday, June 2nd, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, John Helmer, is here with us. Welcome, Mike. John: Thanks for having me. Good to be back. John, let me start with what happened yesterday. The Israelis wanted to attack Dahia in the southern part of Beirut, and it was some sort of announcement on the part of the Israelis. They said that people had to evacuate their homes — the whole city should be evacuated. Then we had some sort of Iranian message. They said there are no talks anymore — no direct, indirect, or any messages between Iran and the United States. They announced that if Israel attacks Dahia, they're going to hit the northern part of Israel, and that the northern part of Israel has to be evacuated. That's why we had a phone call, it seems, as Axios reported, between Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu. What is your understanding of the situation in West Asia?

## #John

Well, better put this into the bigger context — the American election context — and then we'll come to the Russian election context, so that everyone should understand that the first things that presidents do, and Trump and Putin are doing the same thing as all presidents always do at election time, they're trying to win the next election. And Trump's problem, you can read, is not the Israelis, it's not the Iranians, it's American voters. He cannot do anything to shake his basic disapproval level. There's been, since we last spoke, a slight one-percentage-point improvement in his approval, and that means the gap is slightly less.

But the gap of disapproval over approval for Trump on inflation, on the war in Iran, remains the same as we spoke of last week. In other words, nothing Trump does reassures U.S. voters. That means he has to try to do two things at the same time. And the so-called telephone call leaked by Israel — Axios is an Israeli mouthpiece. Barak Ravid, the reporter at Axios, with an Italian-named sidekick, is in fact speaking for Netanyahu. So when the Axios report of an expletive-laden telephone call between Trump and Netanyahu is published on the front page — the digital front page of Axios — it means the Israelis want to show two things.

It also means that the Jewish Chabad group backing everything Netanyahu does inside the White House also want it clear. They want it clear that with expletives, Trump can control Netanyahu — that Trump rings up Netanyahu and tells him, expletive deleted for the children in our audience, stop attacking Beirut. That doesn't mean stop invading and establishing Israeli expansion up to and just over the Litani River. It doesn't mean that. It doesn't mean stop attacking Beaufort Castle. They did that. It doesn't mean stop attacking Nabatieh. It doesn't mean any of those things. It doesn't mean stop fighting. It means I want to be seen by my U.S. voters as trying to control Israel and, in fact, controlling Netanyahu by swearing at him.

That's election politics in the U.S. It's not a fundamental problem, or even a tactical change, or even an operational change in U.S. policy. What it does mean is that Trump is the one getting desperate to hold his MAGA constituency, to hold the Republican constituency, voters for the November 3 election. That's what that means. Does it mean that Iran has to respond tit for tat with everything the U.S. does? Yes, because Iranian military capacities must be demonstrated to inflict on Trump a combination of uncertainty and damage that affects U.S. voters. So these wars now — and we'll come to the Russian war in Ukraine and in Europe — these are wars now being fought on election battlefields in the U.S. That's how I see it.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. But, John, do you think that—let's assume we know the midterm election is coming—how do you see the behavior of the Trump administration? Are they going to change in the aftermath of the midterm election? Is it going to depend on what happens during the election? Or, whatever happens in the midterm election, is he going to come back to the same sort of behavior that we've been witnessing since the start of the war, the second round of war against Iran?

## **#John**

Short answer, yes, but it's not just the midterm elections in the U.S., I need to emphasize. I've just done an interview in the Tehran Times with Sahar Dajju, and forgive me, for those who've read that, to repeat myself. Before the November 3 election, what's very important on a U.S. presidential clock is the fall budget review. In other words, between September and November, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, where I was an official during the Carter administration for four years, decides what next year's budget will be, what the money will be for everybody. It's a very contentious and difficult time, intense conflict between the White House, the agencies, the Budget Bureau, and the Congress. Let's say lobbies, for want of a better term, are arguing for more money, resisting cuts to their budgets for next year.

That means that military operations have to be shown to be successful. Military operations that aren't successful have their budgets cut. Budget cuts mean political damage to the people responsible for those agencies. That's General Kane and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That's John Ratcliffe at the CIA. It's Admiral Cooper in charge of Central Command. In other words, military

operations must be escalated or must be shown to achieve war aims. Otherwise, before the voters vote, the budget process votes. And that's a combination of the administration and the congressional committees that authorize and then appropriate money. So Trump must appear to be effective.

And under him, and he has poor line control, Russia's presidency has better line control of each of these war-fighting, covert operations, Iran haters, genocide implementers. Trump has poorer control over them. Your question was, do we go back to another situation as we faced in the June war of last year and now the current war? The answer is inevitably yes, because there's no presidential direction here that says we don't want to be at war with Iran. We don't want to be at war with Russia. No, what we have is a president trying to recapture votes and protect himself from congressional defeat in November, and trying to fight and appear to be a peacemaker at the same time. So you have what some people might call confusion. Some people might call it chaos.

## **#Nima**

No, it's not that.

## **#John**

It's a combination of budget politics and election politics, put in the US context. But we're seeing the same thing in Russia, and we see the same thing everywhere else. You could call it an iron law of politics here. And, pardon me, that means the answer to your question is the US is not being deterred yet by the way in which Iran is fighting back. It's not yet being deterred by the closure of the Hormuz and the effect of the IRGC control of the Hormuz Strait on the entire global economy. It is responding to the political pressure. Take the pressure off, and you'll get back to the same underlying fundamental policies: permanent war against Iran, permanent war against Russia, permanent war against China, Cuba, Venezuela, and the rest.

## **#Nima**

John, you mentioned Russia. How do you connect the situation in Russia to what's going on in the United States? You mentioned the presidential election.

## **#John**

Do you mean... well, it's directly connected because the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin, has a direct negotiator with the Trump administration. Kirill Dmitriev is his name. And without beating a dead horse—and he really is not quite a dead horse, but a dying horse too often—what I should say is there is a direct connection between Trump and Putin through Dmitriev, and they insist, Putin too, that—and I'm getting it from my sources all this week—that there is still in place an agreement between Putin and Trump through Dmitriev, through bribery, I have to add, that will shorten the war, okay?

President Putin goes to election on September 25. That is to say, not a presidential election, a parliamentary election, rather like the congressional midterms. The effect of economic recession in Russia has been to substantially cut into President Putin's stable approval rate. What that has triggered is increasing concern that the United Russia ruling party will lose its majority and that the opposition, composed of the Communists, smaller parties, and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, the LDPR, will, between them, achieve a significant majority—not necessarily a controlling majority, but an embarrassing victory.

To prevent that—and President Putin's entire Kremlin staff is devoted to this—to prevent that outcome will require a significant combination of election fraud, rigging the votes, at least as much as 5%, which was standard during the Yeltsin administration, and perhaps in some places up to 10%, especially to kill the Communist vote or a protest vote spreading from the single constituency contest to the proportional party vote. To do that, the president and the Kremlin have to promise a short war, promise a short war. And you've seen a number of statements by the president in recent days indicating that he has the confidence he can end the war quickly on the Ukraine battlefield.

And that's reflected in continuous tweeting by Dmitriev, who's basically finding no fault with anything Trump does in order to encourage Trump to allow Russia to escalate on the Ukraine battlefield. And we've seen that too. We've seen a combination of Ukrainian drone escalation with significant—let's not build any lilies here, and let's not exaggerate, but let's not deny—very significant success in the Ukrainian drone strategy, escalation to cut refinery capacity in Russia, to cut port shipments of oil from Russia, to hit the Russian fleet as it moves across the high seas. This drone warfare, including even drones washing up in Greece in the Ionian Sea, has been increasingly successful, not only from the Ukrainian point of view, but from the Russian point of view.

So all of this damages votes, damages votes and confidence. What's to be done? On the one hand, you then have President Putin promising to end it soon. Second, the general staff gets authorized to make attacks, which included the Ereshnik attack at Balitske, which we talked about last time. That was a failure. As a failure of a special weapon, it failed to achieve significant underground bunker damage. Then you have an argument publicly: has Russia changed its policy? This is how I would come to your question. What we saw after the Starobelsk attack on a student dormitory—21 killed, more than 40 injured—what we saw was immediate Kremlin reaction that we must show a capacity to end the war, not simply reply tit for tat.

End it. Okay, as I've said, my sources tell me Putin is promising his staff and making public suggestions he can do it within three months, that the war will be done over by election day. That's September 25th. Okay, at the same time, you have general staff who have all the operational plans which Putin has not allowed to escalate. Why then do they have an argument in public? Foreign Minister Lavrov and the general staff, speaking through the head of the Defense Committee in the Duma, a retired general named Andrei Kartapolov—Kartapolov, I'm sorry—say the new strategy will be systemic and consistent. "Systemic" was understood to mean regime decapitation.

Finally, Putin is saying, hit the command and control staffs, just as the Ukrainians have attempted to do, with some success, killing members of the general staff on the one hand and attacking Putin's residence in Valdai on the other. Then what we have is Lavrov and the general staff announce a systemic and consistent attack. Putin authorizes his two spokesmen, Dmitry Peskov and Yuri Ushakov, to deny this. Peskov says, well, systemic and consistent doesn't mean regular. And what's more, we're looking forward to the resumption of negotiations with Stephen Vitkov and Jared Kushner. That's the Dmitriyev line. That's the "I love the United States" line. And that's coming out from both Ushakov and Peskov. And Ushakov goes even further. He basically says that no one has been authorized and no message has gone from Russia, from the Kremlin, to Trump.

Well, what on earth did that mean, since Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister, had said, "I'm authorized," and he said it to Secretary of State Rubio, "I'm authorized by the President of Russia to tell you that we are now escalating to systemic and consistent." They are then fighting among themselves in public. What happens next? We've just seen it. In the last few hours, you've seen the reports—the official reports from the Russian Defense Ministry, accompanied by all the military blogger details—that there's been a very significant missile attack without the Iskander, but not aimed at command and control centers, rather aimed at the production of drones. Hits in Zaporozhye, hits in the far west of Ukraine, hits in Kherson and other areas.

What the Defense Ministry bulletin, which came out a couple of hours back, indicates is that systemic means against drone production, systemic means against electricity production, the resumption of the electric war campaign, to force the Ukrainians to turn off their nuclear reactors without hitting them because there's no adequate method for carrying the electricity and distributing it out of the nuclear plant into the grid. Attacks finally on the railroads, but not, still not, still not at Putin's direction to cut the Ukraine railway connection to its resupply hubs in Poland. So what we have is an attempt to patch over last week's public argument over what military strategy should be by saying that we now are attacking the drone centers, the drone manufacturing.

This is all part, and it's a necessary part, of the general stuff of winning the war, but it's part of the Putin campaign to win the election. And now the last bit. We've just seen Bloomberg come out with a report that Finance Minister Anton Siluanov—and the report doesn't mention Central Bank Chairwoman Elvira Nabiullina—are, on the eve of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, the most important international economic conference that Russia holds. On the eve of this meeting, the two senior finance officials of the Russian government are saying we must cut our expenses, we must cut our military expenses to balance our budget, to cut the Russian budget deficit. So now we have, openly, Bloomberg is not a brilliant—it's a propaganda organ.

This time the propaganda organ is saying Russia feels vulnerable, which is a propaganda line of the European states and the United States. Russia's vulnerable because its military spending is going out of control. In order to balance the budget and control inflation, those are the two, as it were, key words of the Nabiullina, Dmitriev, and now Siluanov faction. We must cut military expenses. How do you cut, by the way, military expenses when you're escalating in order to finish a war that's gone on

for four years? How do you do that? Well, that's the presidential decision. And President Putin can't make it. So what he does is the same thing as President Trump does. He says contradictory things out of both sides of his mouth. He tries to escalate because he must.

Public opinion, after Starobel, insists: finish it or negotiate. If you can't negotiate, finish it. And any restriction that Putin imposes on the general staff quickly becomes the perception he's weak. And the perception that he's weak is what drives the deep state of the United States and all the European powers to escalate as best they can. So what we have then is President Putin fighting an election and now under attack publicly through Bloomberg, but they're not saying anything that hasn't been made public in the Russian media—to cut military expenses while he's trying to finish the war. And so that's the conflict we now have in Moscow. Doesn't it sound similar, in election terms, budget terms, to the one that Trump has in Washington?

## **#Nima**

John, what do they say about—you mentioned Kirill Dmitriev. Is there any negotiation going on as we talk, or do they have some sort of pause? Because Donald Trump today came out and said, this is fake news he's talking about, there are no negotiations going on between Iran and the United States. We are talking to each other, but nobody's willing to mention that the Iranians said there is no negotiation. For two days, there were no negotiations between the two sides. But when it comes to Russia, what do we know about that?

## **#John**

Well, around warmaking, around all politics, you always have kibitzers. That's the expression for people who want to seem as if they're central to a negotiation, who want to seem to be knowledgeable, who want to influence outcomes, but who aren't part of formal negotiation and don't direct orders—either military ones, diplomatic ones, or political ones. So there are lots of kibitzers all broadcasting that they are having talks, and that's going on all the time. Second, there is an open telephone line between Ushakov and Vitko. We know that because some of the tapes have been leaked.

Witko and Ushakov want to talk—they do, by telephone. Is that a negotiation? Yes, it is. The same attempts are being made by Dmitriev to make himself look as if he's central to this process. He's a kibitzer because he has to constantly fight against the general staff and the foreign ministry, as we've just said. Is there, in fact, a formal negotiation that would bind the Ukrainian side, the U.S. side, to do what Russia has already tabled? Well, Dmitry Peskov said a couple of hours back, this war could end if Ukraine pulled out or withdrew its forces from the Donbass.

That means Zaporozhye, Kherson, Donetsk, and Lugansk. If they pulled out, this war would be over immediately. Is there then a negotiation on that point? Answer: no. Why is there no negotiation? Because all the sides—and on this point, Dmitriev is simply throwing sand and putting up a smoke

screen—all the sides, the U.S. side, is as committed to permanent war with Russia as the Europeans. It benefits from this escalation of drone capacity that the Ukrainians are demonstrating. The U.S. side wants to see Russia's refinery capacity cut by 30 or 40%, as we now face at the moment. So is there a negotiation to stop that? Answer: no.

## **#Nima**

John, do you see any sort of sign when it comes to Russia and Iran? We know that the war is happening. One side is the United States. The other side, in West Asia, is Iran, and in Eurasia, in Europe, is Russia. And when it comes to the understanding of the Russian people and the Russian government and these different factions in Russia, what do they feel about, when you put all these vectors together, the outcome? The outcome of these vectors is about more negotiating with the United States. It's about the United States not wanting Russia to be a superpower. That's why they try to continue this war. What is the general understanding on the part of public opinion, on the part of the government, and different factions within the government?

## **#John**

Do you mean Russian public opinion or U.S. public opinion?

## **#Nima**

No, Russian public opinion. I'm talking about the Russian people and the way they perceive this war. This war is getting to five years now. It's a huge war when you look at what has happened so far. Correct. How do they perceive that? Well, I'm talking about the perception of the objectives of the United States. How do they see the United States? How do they see the way the United States is continuing this war?

## **#John**

So the Russian public opinion, like all public opinions, tries to inform itself as best it can. It does not trust its leadership to tell the truth. Russians are better educated at discounting for state propaganda than Americans. They're also better educated in general. However, they're subject to the same propaganda technologies, and they watch television as their principal source of news. The younger ones are more informed by social media. And the propaganda systems of the state and the foreign states, the hostile states, operate differently through these things. There is a relatively stable two-thirds majority of Russian people who want negotiations, who want to achieve peace, who want to end the war.

Bear in mind that public opinion in the country has been divided by social class, region, education, and income, so that the poorest Russians are fighting the war and the wealthiest Russians are sitting back trying to enjoy a normal economy, business as usual. That means that Moscow, St. Petersburg,

Tyumen, and a few other relatively well-off regions of the country, which are visited by American podcasters and influencers like conservative Candace Owens, for example, are regularly visited and regularly amplified in the Russian press, saying how normal, how beautiful, how unusual.

They're simply reflecting the fact that they don't know anything at all about the Russian domestic economy and don't know Russian people. They become propaganda weapons. So Russian public opinion is relatively stable, but after Starobelsk—and I haven't seen polling to indicate this—the rise in the view, especially among Russian men aged over 30, is: this war must be finished, we must finish them off. Now, bear in mind that from the Russian public opinion point of view, from the man in the street's point of view, public support for President Putin is correlated with public confidence in the Russian army.

If the Russian army is perceived publicly as not being able to protect our people, our refineries, our internet, our electricity, our ability to fly or catch the train on time—if the army is perceived to be failing at that or not doing as well as we thought—then Russians think the president isn't doing his job. Russian public opinion supports Putin in the absence of any alternative, based on military success in the war. And Ukrainians understand this. The U.S. understands this. They must show the army to be failing. They must show the country to be unprotected.

That's why they attacked Starobelsk as they did—to demonstrate to Russians. It wasn't a military target; it was a propaganda target. People were killed to demonstrate to Russians and break that correlation between the army and the presidency. So the Russian reaction is: we rally behind our president, behind our army, but we must finish it. Now, in that situation, you've seen—my colleague Ray McGovern has mentioned many times on this podcast—that Russians want to believe the best of the United States, but they don't now. They understand that the U.S. is driving this war.

They do not have the confidence in either Trump, which they had when he was elected, or that Dmitriev insists that Putin has now, or Nabiullina, or Siluanov. That's a political faction fight. Most Russians do not have that confidence. They understand their principal enemies are the United States, Germany, and the British. And everything that comes out of the media propaganda platforms of the world convinces them this is still the case. Now, the Russians have a deep understanding of German behavior, but they also understand now how weak the German political system is and how dominated it has always been by the United States.

So there's no confidence that the U.S. is pulling out of Germany. And all the media that you'll see shows that Trump's performative attacks on Chancellor Merz are then reinforced and contradicted by increasing U.S. willingness to put nuclear weapons in Germany, in Poland, in Finland, and everywhere else. The Russians understand this is a war, a long-term war, but nobody wants to live in a state of permanent war. So everyone looks to Putin to finish it. Everyone except the Dmitriev, Nabiullina, Siluanov faction. And they love the United States. They want to be loved by the United States. They want to be back in business as usual. But they are a tiny minority. Their power comes from President Putin.

## **#Nima**

John, my understanding is that when it comes to West Asia, there would be no deal, no agreement, I would say, between Iran and the United States. It's going to be some sort of, you know, at best, it's going to be some sort of, you know, the United States leaving the region and letting the war go on and on in the Middle East, this conflict going on. And the same thing, in my opinion, would happen with the case of Russia, because if Donald Trump was serious about the case of Ukraine, he would have put an end to the war before starting the war against Iran. And right now he has two wars, and one of them is against Iran that is complicating the whole situation with the global economy, with domestic policy in the United States. And even when he is in this war against Iran, he could put an end to the war in Ukraine because he knows there's tremendous pressure on the Trump administration. So he could do something about Ukraine, about the war. He didn't do anything. This is the problem.

## **#John**

You're quite right. I agree with you. Let me ask you a question first, and then I'll try and answer yours. The situation I've described for Russian people that you asked me about, generating the need to resolve the economic risks we are all facing, that is a powerful driver of Iranian public opinion. So please tell me, to what extent do you see Iranian negotiation for short-term relief on war, an attempt to say to Iranian people, we can break out of the sanctions misery that's causing inflation? We can break out of Trump's confidence that he can squeeze Iran's economy to death. Tell me, in your opinion, what's Iranian public opinion now on the effect of being squeezed to death economically by the United States? What's the impact of that public opinion on the readiness to sign an MOU, a relief, a 60-day ceasefire, a two-year pause, let's say, but a permanent war nonetheless? How is Iranian public opinion reacting?

## **#Nima**

To be honest, in Iranian public opinion, together with many people in the government and among the decision makers in Iran, they don't believe that the United States would lift any sort of sanctions on Iran or, you know, in the case of the frozen assets, they're not going to release the frozen Iranian assets. And these are the two important points right now. The only thing is that right now they don't want this war to start again. That's why they may talk with the United States, but they know that there is nothing, no outcome, no positive outcome through these negotiations with the United States, because they see that every time they were negotiating with the United States, two times they were attacked by the Israelis, then the United States.

Right now, what is happening in the minds of Iranians is, if we can negotiate, if we can send—it's not negotiations, by the way—the two sides are sending messages back and forth. If we can do something, some sort of letter or document to temporarily put an end to the war, we can do it with

these messages. If not, everything's going to be on the battlefield. If the United States is going to get back, we're going to respond. And what is so complicated in the case of Iran is the situation between Israel and Lebanon.

Iran said there would be no agreement or no deal as long as Israel is attacking Lebanon and attacking Gaza. And they're bringing these two cases right now to the negotiations. That's why I don't see—the public opinion is not positive by any measure—that they can get something through these negotiations. That's why you see the head of the Iranian parliament two days ago said, we decide about the outcome of the war on the battlefield, and we document the results of the battlefield on paper. It's not going to be through negotiations. This is the mindset of the majority of Iranian people right now.

## **#John**

Well, thank you for putting it so clearly. Can I put to you another question, which was put to me by an Iranian colleague, who said that in the earlier generation, the generation that lived through Saddam's war—the Iraq war, also backed by the United States against Iran—at that time, the internal Iranian movement, public opinion, was not suffering from the level of economic squeeze and strangulation that the U.S. blockade, the U.S. and European sanctions, the global sanctions against Iran, are inflicting now. So the question was put to me, and I didn't know the answer, so I'm asking you: is there a generational difference between the middle-aged Iranian, the parents and the children, over the difference between the 1980 war with Iraq and the present war against everybody?

## **#Nima**

John, when you... Parents' generation. Yeah, the Iran-Iraq war, the situation in those days is not even comparable to what's going on right now in Iran. You go to Iran today, there are sanctions, there is inflation, and people are feeling this tremendous pressure from the United States. But people's lives, you know, were improved drastically. It's not even comparable. Today, going to Iran is totally different. The government has somehow managed how to deal with those sanctions. Because the Iran-Iraq war was at the beginning of the revolution. Yes. And right now, the revolution, for more than 40 years, they know how to manage everything, how to deal with the sanctions. We had some years during the first Trump administration that Iran was not even able to export any oil.

Yes. They had this sort of history before, and they know how to deal with that right now. That's why they're not willing, that's why they're not in a rush to make a deal, make some sort of agreement with the United States. That's why whenever Donald Trump asks them to answer some sort of, you know, new messages, it's going to last as long as they want because they have the Strait of Hormuz. Today, I don't know if you saw the report of this authority of the Strait of Hormuz, the new mechanism of the Strait of Hormuz. Since they started with this new mechanism, more than 300

ships or tankers passed through the Strait of Hormuz, and all of them paid the tolls. So the United States can argue, Donald Trump can argue, that we are putting a lot of pressure on them.

And there is some sort of truth to what he's talking about because of the blockade. But it's not that much to destroy. No. The country is so comfortable. They know what's at stake for them. They know how to deal. And the pressure is bearable. It's not something unbearable for the Iranian people and the Iranian economy. That's why they would continue these cycles of conflict as long as the Trump administration wants to continue with the policies in Lebanon, in Gaza, and against Iran in the Persian Gulf. I think the understanding is this, that they can outlast the United States—or the Trump administration, not the United States, the Trump administration.

## **#John**

Well, thank you for that. I'm trying to compare what you've said about Iranian public resistance and acceptance of permanent war. And as I understand it, I share the view that the reason Iran is making Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Gaza, and now extending—if these continue—the Bab el-Mandeb Strait closure would follow. The reason is that the U.S. can sign an MOU, but the permanent war continues using the Israeli platform. And the Israeli platform of expansion into Syria, into Lebanon, into Gaza—these are all parts of the war that will continue because Iran is now the principal pillar of resistance to that transformation.

So if Russian public opinion was similar, we would not see the extent of the vacillation between President Putin, his general staff and foreign ministry and intelligence services on the one hand, and the finance minister, the central bank governor, and the Dmitriev Group representing Russian business—we would not see that so public. So in a certain sense, Russian public opinion, to go back to your question, isn't prepared to accept permanent war against Russia. They do understand. The man in the street understands that you do the best you can to negotiate.

You understand that enemies like the Germans, the Americans, and the British will not be dissuaded. They understand that. So there's a difference there in the political leadership. There's a difference there in public opinion and in the way they connect. Yes, on the other hand, the effect of 40 years of sanctions against Iranian business has wiped out the group—the so-called Russian oligarchy—that still wants to return to its villas in Italy, the Côte d'Azur in France, and its mansions in New York, Colorado, and Washington, D.C. That faction remains much stronger in Russia than it exists in Iran. Am I right about that?

## **#Nima**

Yeah. John, I think when it comes—you compared Russia and Iran—but after all, I think the two countries are getting to the point of understanding that the United States doesn't want to make a deal with these two countries. I think the elites in these two countries are getting to that point, that there would be no deal between them and the United States. And in the case of Russia, the situation

is somewhat complicated, with the Europeans being part of this, and they want to support Ukraine. In the case of Iran, we have the Israeli factor influencing the situation. So they have their own complications, their own difficulties. Yes.

But I want to see the big picture here. When you look at the big picture, do you think that the Trump administration—just forget about Iranians and Russians—is the Trump administration capable of making any sort of agreement? Today we had Marco Rubio talking about what has happened in China, right? He clearly says that there was no achievement, there was no positive outcome for the United States. That's why they're trying to diversify the rare earth minerals that they're getting mostly from China. I want to say, is this administration capable of any sort of agreement with Russia, China, or Iran? Because this is the big picture of understanding what's going on.

## **#John**

I'm having to answer in political terms. And that's the most important political function, answering your question — the succession to Trump. Trump is so sensitive to his succession, he's just authorized the White House to report on his medical checkup in the last few days. I just put that up in a tweet. And what that shows is he claims that he just scored 30 out of 30 points on the Montreal Cognitive Assessment Scale. So I put it up as a tweet, and everybody can do the test to see if they can identify a picture of a tiger, see if they can draw a bed, see if they can remember five words that have just been uttered at them, and so forth. Trump is very concerned about succession.

He also is trying to maintain his ability, through the MAGA constituency within the Republican Party, to control the succession and dictate it. Now, I say all of these things as background to the big picture you've just raised. The big picture is permanent war. But with the Trump group, which includes the Chabad-ideologically-infected Jewish advisers like the ambitious Stephen Miller, Deputy Chief of Staff, and backed by Jared Kushner, Witkoff, Lutnick at Commerce, and others. These people are warmongers—essentially military action, genocide outcomes for Iran, for the Middle East. The opposition in the succession is Rubio, a Roman Catholic, and J.D. Vance, also Roman Catholic.

Vance is currently the leading contender to become the Republican nominee in 2028. And 2028 is rapidly approaching — it's only two years off. Trump's readiness to allow a successor like Vance, or his vulnerability if Vance or Rubio take over, are what are driving his interest in creating a dynastic succession — either Eric Trump or Donald Trump Jr. The polls currently measure Donald Trump Jr. as 10%, 12%, 13% favored by Republicans. In this succession context, my answer to your question is: Vance represents a Catholic doctrine of the just war, and the Iran war and the Ukraine war don't qualify in quite the way the Jewish faction, the Chabad faction, does.

And Trump will go one way or another with his sentiment primarily towards Chabad, towards Miller, towards the Jewish community. So there is some prospect that with Vance and Rubio, you would have what we began with when the Trump administration began, when we were talking about the strategy of sequencing wars — where the U.S. would pull out of wars that they were unable to win

directly or even indirectly through the Europeans, like the Ukraine war. They would reinforce Europe for the long-term campaign against Russia and minimizing Russian power in Europe. They would concentrate on Venezuela, Cuba, the Americas. They would build a new American fortress.

Yes, that clearly is in line with what Rubio and Vance want. They would then withdraw from, and find methods of negotiating semi-permanent withdrawal terms from, the Iran war and from the Ukraine war. And we saw Vance doing exactly that at the Islamabad conference. Did he walk out because he wanted to reach no agreement, or was he ordered to walk out because Trump told him, "It's enough, I need to think about things"? We won't know exactly until all the retrospective accounts are clear. But I think it's already clear from what Vance is saying, and also what Rubio is saying. They want to position themselves as the peacemakers within the Republican Party.

In the succession, that makes Trump and his family particularly nervous because they might face impeachment, prosecution, seizure of assets, and prison for the level of corruption they brought to the office. So I think that, and this is a real problem for Iranian military and strategic calculation, is how to exploit the difference between Vance-Rubio, the Catholic succession, and the Jewish one. Okay, that's a problem that isn't easy to solve. And we can at least talk about it as an answer to your question. I think permanent war on the Republican side is more than matched by permanent war.

On the Democratic side, we've just seen William Burns, the ex-Deputy Secretary of State and the ex-CIA Director, give a lengthy interview with *The Economist*, basically saying that we have to continue to escalate the pressure on Russia in Europe. We know perfectly well that the Democrats, or "Domocrats" as Trump calls them in his tweets now, are as committed to genocide in Iran as they were and are in Gaza—the destruction of Palestine forever, the expansion of Israel. The Democrats represent a threat to Trump, yes, but a continuous threat to Iran, to Russia, and to China. So, where do we end up in answer to your question? Well, Russia, China, and Iran are now engaged in the same war—permanent war—against the United States.

And we see, particularly on the Chinese and Russian side, strong factions in favor of peace at any price now, because over time we need time. We need time to rearm, prepare, or, on the Chinese side, we think time is working for us. The American economy is in decline against us. We can exploit our non-kinetic, non-military forces, and you mentioned rare earths as one of them. So that's the way I see the future, and it's got a very big question mark. If the Democratic Party represents, let's call it the Chabad Jewish alternative within the Trump succession, what can be done by the Troika—Iran, Russia, and China—to improve the possibilities of success in succession for Vance and Rubio?

If war is the extension of politics by other means, then the American presidential succession race is part of the war that Iran, Russia, and China must fight. Yes? And if we must fight that fight, you'll see that there are differences of opinion. Yes, you've mentioned Mr. Ghalibov's very interesting comments. I'd also add the one about the winner of the war against Iran being the one who's best prepared to fight the next day, the day after the negotiation. Now, that's a basic statement that no

Russian of his, let's say, political platform and status is willing to say. Permanent war means permanent preparedness. Permanent preparedness means permanent cost. And who's to pay the cost, and who's to accept the sacrifice?

This is antithetical to the Putin administration's view that we can have a normal economy in Moscow and St. Petersburg so that visiting podcasters from the United States say, "What a beautiful place. I had no idea it was like this," revealing their massive ignorance and their massive culpability in a propaganda scheme. Iran is putting up very clearly the understanding that permanent war means permanent sacrifice. But not permanent sacrifice forever—if Iran, Russia, and China together can, let's say, advance on all fronts, then there's more hope than I personally have, but more hope of an end to permanent war on terms that we can all live better.

**#Nima**

Yeah. Good point. Good point, John. Thank you so much for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always.

**#John**

Thank you, Nima. Thanks for having me. Let's see what next week will bring.

**#Nima**

Exactly.