

Pepe Escobar: Iran's Next Nuclear Move Just Changed Everything (It's a Smashing Deterrent)

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#Nima

Pepe, did the source say what was the necessity of Iran announcing this right now? Because it didn't seem to me... looking at the war, they don't need to. They have it. They somehow defeated the United States with conventional weapons. They have the Strait of Hormuz. So what was the necessity? I'm talking about what was the context of the talks between the two presidents that made Iran need to mention that.

#Pepe

You are absolutely right. And before all that happened, I published a column—oh, God. Yes, I published a column early this week, basically tracking what happened last week before this phone call. Let me see if I can find it here. Yes. "Iran: The Art of Controlling Escalation Dominance." This column was published, if I'm not mistaken, on Monday. Saturday—no, on Monday, I'm sorry, on Monday, on Strategic Culture. And then I talk about what was happening in terms of American provocations, one after another, and of course CENTCOM talking about attacks on Iranian radar and command sites, including Qeshm Island—CENTCOM terminology, self-defense strikes. And the IRGC Aerospace Force, their response—they targeted a Kuwaiti air base already, saying that the predicted targets were destroyed and the American regime is lying, as usual.

So we're already starting a very dangerous escalation cycle. So this is what was happening last week before we had this phone call. What the source didn't say is who called whom. For instance, they didn't tell us if Sharif called Pozreshkin or vice versa. But they gave us basically the heart of the matter during the 105 minutes of a very long conversation. So this could be the Iranians trying to tell the mediators, of course, look, we are fed up. That's it. And we've been trying to tell you all the time that we are fed up. We have tried everything diplomatically. The Americans keep changing the rules of the game, and they keep violating the ceasefire. So all that, for Iran, comes down to the same thing. They are untrustworthy, and they only understand a stark message if we deliver a stark message to them.

So obviously, they talk to the mediators and tell the mediators, look, you should tell the White House now, this is our definitive position. And if they don't stop the provocations, that's the third stage of what Pozeshkin said. If they don't stop the provocations, we are willing to end our nuclear ambiguity. That's, of course, the ultra bombshell in this phone call. So whatever the response we're going to get from this person, who is very close to Mojtaba Khamenei, and I'm very curious to see what they're going to say, it will probably leave the whole thing open. For instance, he can tell us something that will be extremely plausible in terms of Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei reviewing Iran's nuclear posture, which is something that is already being discussed in Iran, right? Seriously.

These fatwas by Khomeini and Khamenei's father — should they be adapted to a new situation where Iran is under existential attack? Quite possible, feasible, logical. And, of course, this would imply Mojtaba Khamenei leaving his mark already, already defining his legacy. And this is something that can be framed to Iranian public opinion and everybody would understand it: look, we are compelled to do this, otherwise the provocations will never stop. And we're going to enter into a never-ending toxic cycle of American provocations, false flags, trying to implicate us into a response. Then we are blamed for our response, and then there are more American attacks. And this ball keeps rolling nonstop.

Obviously, the new Iranian leadership doesn't want that. They want peace, for all wars to stop. How do you convince the Americans that all wars should stop? There's no other way, considering their obsession with nuclear weapons. They actually say, look, now we are the new North Korea. You want to come here and attack us? But of course, Nima, you know this better than I do or anybody else, that there is the theological aspect of it all, the Shiite theological aspect of it all, and Mojtaba will go directly against the policies of Khomeini and his dad. So this is the most fateful decision imaginable, right? But I would say that the reality on the ground is forcing a re-study, at least, of Iran's nuclear posture.

Because the empire and Israel will never give up, Nima. You know this very well. Everybody in Iran knows this very well. Only if you have deterrents like that. For instance, Iran has other forms of deterrents that they haven't even used, that can be even more lethal than holding a nuclear bomb. But they are saving them for the right moment. And they also know that the only language these obsessive killers understand is, okay, if a country has a nuclear weapon, there's nothing we can do about it. The North Korea lesson, right? Compared to the Libya lesson or the Iraq lesson. Well, so that's where we are, Nima. It's serious. It's very complicated.

#Nima

I think the points that you've raised are so important. One of them is that Iran doesn't want to continue with this sort of thing, because Iran says that, yeah, exactly, with these cycles of attacks, it's the same strategy as we've seen with the case of Gaza, with the case of Lebanon — continuous war. And that's why I think what the United States is trying to do in the region is the same. They

want to continue this sort of campaign, go on and on, fighting, attacking, and this sort. Iran doesn't want this. I can assure everybody that nobody wants this in Iran. They want to put an end to the war permanently. That's why they're so — I think they know what they want. And the outcome, I'm talking about the outcome.

But the means could be through talks, negotiations, messages, or war, which nobody believes so far in Iran. Nobody believes that — I'm talking about decision makers — that they can get everything by negotiations. That's why you see the head of the Iranian parliament saying that everything's gonna be decided on the battlefield, then documented on paper. And this is the first time you see the head of the Iranian parliament talking this way. And he said, who wins the war? The one that is prepared for tomorrow, the day after the deal, the day after the agreement, to fight. And he's talking about basically that there is no talk or negotiation. It's all about fighting on the battlefield. The battlefield will decide the future of the conflict, of the situation between Iran and the United States.

I think that's one point. When it comes to the nuclear program, which is so sensitive, Pepe, so sensitive. Nobody's talking about it. You look at the mainstream media in Iran, Persian media — they're not talking about it. But what I feel about what's going on with the discussions, with the few discussions that are happening in Iran, my understanding is that the new Supreme Leader of Iran didn't change the policy of his father, who was the previous Supreme Leader of Iran. This is my understanding. I think they still consider the nuclear bomb as this mass murder weapon, something that Iran at this particular moment doesn't want. This is my understanding. And with the situation with the war, we know that Israel is — we had the Israelis talking about using the nuclear.

Even Benjamin Netanyahu said "the final solution for Iran." What is that? What does that mean? This is a historical sort of term used by Benjamin Netanyahu. And many people are arguing, what does that mean with the behavior of Israel? And they know that Israel is not going to be able to defeat Iran with conventional weapons. And these are, as you mentioned, we are witnessing some sort of fluid conditions that, as time goes by, everything is so fluid. And we don't know what's going on. With the war in Ukraine, it was the same, as you mentioned. We started this war — all of us, we thought that this was going to end in one year, then two years. And right now we're approaching five years of war. This is the strategy of the Empire, Pepe. They want to trap Russia. They want to trap Iran in continuous conflict and war.

#Pepe

Absolutely. Absolutely. And so far they are succeeding. But the Iranians can break the cycle. And they know how to break the cycle because their response now, from now on, is going to be unbearable for the other side. There's no other way. It's the right strategy. They have to escalate the tempo. There's no question about that. And, of course, the Russians are looking at it and thinking about the same thing. We have to escalate the tempo. And they are fighting... Russia is fighting the whole of the West at the same time. That's quite something.

But Iran, they are fighting everything that the empire has thrown against them and Israel together. The two most... Okay, consider the Israeli army is not exactly on the field — they don't exist there. They are specialized in killing from the air and bombing from the air and killing innocent civilians. But it's still an enormously devastating fighting force. And Iran is fighting against both by itself. It's quite something. But what they managed to do in less than three months is already absolutely remarkable. And that explains this feeling of self-confidence. Okay, we are going to achieve what we want, as you said, on the battlefield.

And then they're going to have to recognize what we achieved on the battlefield. So the strategic defeat of the U.S. will, wow, be for all the world to see, in fact, right? And that brings us to the key point of how can any—irrespective of Trump, who is a lowly minor character—any president or any leadership in the U.S. simply cannot admit that the empire has been strategically defeated like that. By a mid-ranking power under sanctions for 47 years. It is absolutely remarkable, and that's why this war is changing the geopolitics of the 21st century. Much more than these very polite discussions about multipolarity. They have not achieved much so far.

#Nima

And what's making, Pepe, the situation even worse is the case of Lebanon and Israel. Just moments ago, the Iranian foreign minister said Iran's armed forces are ready and willing to resume war against Israel at any moment. If Israel strikes Beirut, Iran will respond. This is not a question of if Iran would respond. Iran will respond to Israel if they attack Beirut. And I don't see Donald Trump being able to do anything about Israel. And Israel is just getting out of hand. They're doing whatever they want to do.

#Pepe

No, it's impossible, Nima. First of all, he doesn't care. Number two, he doesn't care about civilian victims in Gaza or in Lebanon. Second, he wants an off-ramp because he finally realized, in his own non-strategic way, that he messed up big, big time. And nobody's going to save him from his decision. He was misled by the leader of that death cult over there. Of course he was. He was sold a quick war that would last a weekend. And now he's in a quagmire with no way out, unless he admits that he was strategically defeated. And that, from an imperial point of view, is when an empire does that, that's it. That's the end of the empire. So what's the most plausible way? What do we have now, which is no war, no peace?

And no war, no peace can go on forever. Days, weeks, months. He cannot go through months because he has an election, which, by the way, he already lost the midterms. And he's going to become a lame duck. And he's going to have to live with it. And probably people will go after his throat to impeach him, go after his family, his cronies, etc. He can feel what's ahead. And, of course, how can he extract some sort of deal from, let's put it this way, that he can sell as a victory, domestically and globally? Impossible. The Iranians will never allow him to do that. And that's the

beauty of it. Who holds the cards? Tehran. Who controls the possible escalation or de-escalation? Tehran. Who controls when the war will actually end? Tehran. There you go. Yeah.

#Nima

Let me read the breaking news here, Pepe. Yes. Here is what Iran just announced: the Iranian Navy said it targeted a U.S. warship in the Sea of Oman a few hours ago, and they released this footage here, Pepe.

#Pepe

They released the footage because CENTCOM was saying it was not true. Ah, so now we have footage.

#Nima

They released the video that targeted the American warship in the Sea of Oman, and they have released that to confirm what's going on. I think there are many things, many targets that were hit by Iranian missiles and drones in Kuwait, in Bahrain, in the UAE, I would say, that we are not aware of, because they are too sensitive in these countries.

#Pepe

And, of course, U.S. Navy vessels somewhere in the Sea of Oman. No question. Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah, I'm trying to find it here. Yeah, right. Yeah, yeah. So we are back to provocation, escalation, and response. And the Iranian response from now on is going to be much more hardcore. And when they say that, they follow it. It's not an empty threat.

#Nima

Pepe, the other point, the other dimension before wrapping up this session, I think, is what's going on between Iran and China. We know how deep the relationship is between Iran and Russia, but it's getting the same with Iran and China as time goes by. And as Ghalibaf, the head of the Iranian parliament, is responsible for the negotiations and the new connection between Iran and China, they're deepening the relationship.

#Pepe

They're deepening the strategic partnership. Absolutely. Yeah, yeah. This is immensely significant because he is arguably the most, I wouldn't say competent, but the best-prepared member of this new governing setup. And it's not an accident that they gave him this opportunity, a strategic post, in fact, as the coordinator of the strategic partnership with China. And in the larger picture of this

China-Pakistan-Iran alignment to try to find some sort of accommodation with the empire running out of control. Of course, the Chinese know very well that this is a war against them as well. And they are the main target of the Americans. They know everything. Is this—you're showing—I saw you were showing the missile again.

#Nima

No, this is—yeah, this is the article in The Cradle today. On The Cradle, yeah.

#Pepe

Principal is a strategic partner. There's no question about that. The number one strategic partner for Iran is China. It's not Russia. It's China. No question about that. And it's part of, according to our source, what Dar, the foreign minister of Pakistan, put to Rubio: look, the Chinese are actually helping Iran with high-tech military materials. And there's nothing you can do about it, or any of us. It's part of their strategic partnership. Don't expect the Chinese to announce that or to admit it officially. It's not how it works in China. This is all made very discreetly through third countries, always. So China always has plausible deniability.

So all of that stuff is going through Southeast Asia, Kazakhstan. There are many possibilities. Never tracked directly to China. And in discussions with Chinese scholars, for instance, they are paying attention—sorry, Nima—they're paying a lot of attention to Iran. When you look at the best analytical articles in some Chinese media not regulated by Beijing, most of them are connected to Iran, and they rarely talk about Ukraine. Because now they are concentrated especially on the EU and this new stupidity beyond anything imaginable coming from the EU—that they want to criminalize Chinese overproduction. How can you be so stupid?

The Europeans are incapable of producing stuff that other people want to buy, but the Chinese produce stuff that the whole planet wants to buy. So now they're going to be criminalized by the Europeans. It's beyond stupid. So obviously the discussion in Chinese media is about that. They barely talk about the war in Ukraine. But Iran, oh yes. And that's a very, very good analysis. And they respect the fact that Iran is a key strategic partner for China in West Asia. Although they have close relations with almost everybody—the Chinese way, right? They do business with everybody. But in terms of a strategic and pinpointed anchor of a post-American West Asia, the Chinese are betting everything on Iran. No question.