

Iran STRIKES Tankers, Trump BACKS DOWN – WW3 is HERE | KJ Noh

Analyst and political commentator KJ Noh discusses Trump in major retreat against Iran as a deal to end the war is reportedly imminent. Iran has fired on numerous tankers overnight sending a strong message that the status quo has changed forever. KJ comments on the emerging fronts of a World War 3 scenario in motion. Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong> SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: <https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong> Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong> Telegram: <https://t.me/DannyHaiphong> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> #iran #trump #iranwar

#Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I am joined by political commentator and analyst KJ Noh. KJ, it's good to see you again.

#KJ Noh

Good to be with you, Danny.

#Danny

Everybody hit the like button. That helps boost the program. It's always great to be with you, KJ. Now let's get started right away because I wanted to begin with the fact that there are two developments happening in the U.S. war on Iran right now that are happening in tandem. For days now, the Strait of Hormuz has been officially completely closed—not simply being regulated by Iran, but Iran has closed it completely down for commercial shipping—due to the aggression of the United States against it two straight days last week. And over this time, we saw yesterday that a tanker was attacked by Iran off the coast of Oman. The crew was deemed safe after an unknown projectile hit. Iran has confirmed that they have been firing warning shots and that they have been ensuring that any vessel that attempts to leave the Strait is not able to leave the Strait.

And now here is CENTCOM's response. They have responded by saying that Iran launched one-way attack drones to stop commercial shipping, but CENTCOM downed all of them. U.S. forces did in recent hours. And the U.S. is painting itself as the arbiter of keeping the free flow of shipping in the Strait of Hormuz going, saying that each time they down these drones, KJ, that commercial shipping

is going on as usual. And Trump did announce that some 100 million barrels of oil in recent weeks have been transited supposedly out of the Strait of Hormuz by the U.S. Navy. Now, the other development, KJ, is this. This is the one that everyone is talking about right now, this so-called memorandum of understanding.

We are back to the Islamabad Accords, it seems like, from back earlier this spring when the ceasefire, quote-unquote, was first brokered. Now it appears that the Trump administration could be 24 hours away—or Iran says it won't happen actually this weekend—but we could be very close to a so-called signing of this ceasefire agreement that's far more comprehensive. And to be quite clear, far more in favor of what Iran has been asking for since the beginning, just to get to an end to this war and begin actual negotiations. Donald Trump canceled strikes ahead of this announcement that this deal was very close, KJ. So what happened here, and how do you see these developments in the face of Iran? What is becoming quite a volatile situation for the United States in terms of its standing and behavior around the world?

#KJ Noh

Well, certainly the volatility, the violence, the aggression is not something new. It's just that it's not being covered up as well as the U.S. weakens its narrative dominance. But I think the key thing to understand is that Iran has escalation dominance. Foreign Minister Araghchi has said that they are seeking to lock in their battlefield successes in this agreement. The U.S. and Iran seem to be—they both have said that they're very close. And the Pakistani prime minister has also said that they're very, very close. But if you hear some of the language coming out, it would still seem that they're very, very far away regarding the core issues. It's understood that this is going to be a stepwise process involving freezing the conflict and then further negotiations.

It's an MOU, which essentially means it's a written agreement between parties. It really doesn't have any power to enforce itself. But also, I mean, just going back to the history a little bit, think of the Korean War. The U.S. signed a ceasefire with North Korea and China in 1953. They've broken it. I mean, they haven't upheld any of its, you know, core provisions, including the demand not to introduce new weapons into the system. After they signed the armistice, they essentially ignored all of it. The two parties have continued, but the U.S. has continued to escalate against North Korea nonstop since then. So we'll see if anything comes of this. You know, there has been so much flip-flopping.

There's been so much, you know, good cop, bad cop, Jekyll and Hyde behavior that it's really, really hard to know. And until we see something signed and promulgated and ratified, we won't know what the outcome is. But all this is still to say that I believe that there are many people in Iran and around the world who rightfully distrust the United States because they say, as Sergei Lavrov has said, that the United States is not agreement-capable. They say words, sign papers, and then, like

the 320 treaties that it demolished and abrogated with all the Indigenous nations of the United States, we'll see if it amounts to anything. Even if it is written, it's still just an MOU and just the first step of what is potentially a long, long process.

#Danny

Yeah, talk about Jekyll and Hyde. Right before there was this sudden flip by the Trump administration to focus on a deal, there were reports from CNN that there were plans on June 12th — you know, they were reported on June 12th. But during the return to the strikes that occurred, there were talks with General, the Chief of Staff, Dan Cain, for a review of a ground invasion of Iran to steal its enriched uranium. And now CNN is reporting that actually Iran has ensured that there is no way to enter their uranium facilities, and they have heavily mined around what they've already collapsed, which is the entrances to them. So no way to seize that. But nonetheless, this was being discussed very recently. So again, the back and forth, the expectation of war is still very much, it seems, on the minds of Iran and, I'm sure, the rest of the world. It's really difficult to have faith in the U.S.'s word here.

#KJ Noh

Absolutely. And, you know, I and other commentators have said this. In the war, the U.S. is not simply fighting Iran. It is actually fighting reality. And, you know, reality wins. The simple fact is that the U.S., if it were to do a boots-on-the-ground occupation of Iran, would probably need in the range of three million troops that it does not have. It has about 450,000 troops in the Army, of which an unknown proportion are actually combat-ready. It would need to at least have three times the military forces of Iran in order to be able to successfully invade. Is it contemplating a rapid lightning strike of special forces? That's possible.

But we saw how well that went earlier. Essentially, you know, it was the Bay of Pigs, you know. So I don't understand what they're thinking. The bombing has been shown not to work. The blockade is porous and has been shown not to work. Boots on the ground is an absolute fool's errand. And I have pointed this out, other people have pointed this out. There are six or seven fundamental asymmetries that make it so that Iran has escalation dominance and the situation cannot be changed through military means. When I say six asymmetries, there's an asymmetry of resolve. Iran has much, much more powerful resolve to defend itself.

There's an asymmetry of learning curves. The U.S. is not learning. The U.S. military has not been learning since 1991. In fact, it tried to, you know, recycle its old war plans from the 1990s, and that hasn't worked out well. It also should have learned from the Ukraine war. The first thing you do is you avoid concentrating forces. And when it started the war against Iran, it had concentrated forces, and all of those bases were hit. So it is simply not learning. And then there's an asymmetry of the economics, you know, essentially industrial capital versus financialized capital. There's an asymmetry of cost. People have pointed this out endlessly.

You know, if it takes you \$2 to \$5 million worth of interceptors to shoot down a \$30,000 Shahed drone, you cannot sustain that. That's like making a bulletproof vest out of dollar bills. You can make a bulletproof vest out of paper or dollar bills, but you need about 2,000 of them to stop a 38-cent bullet. And then you shoot down, you know, a \$150 million plane with a \$100,000 MANPAD. You know, these things just are simply not sustainable. So there's a fundamental asymmetry of cost. And then, of course, there's the asymmetry of geography. We know that Iran has literally the higher ground. The mountains overlook the Strait of Hormuz like an amphitheater.

And the rest of the Gulf states are flat alluvial plain. You know, they're the field, and Iran has the bleachers. I mean, there's a fundamental asymmetry there. And then asymmetry of tactics and asymmetry of magazine, etc. There are fundamental realities that make it so that the U.S. cannot prevail. And in fact, Iran has dealt the United States a strategic loss, probably the greatest strategic loss since Vietnam or since Korea. And the U.S. has not accepted this, and it still continues to boast about its capacity to, you know, force Iran to its will, when the Iranians have made very, very clear that they're having none of that.

#Danny

And this is being actually, you know, I'll pull up the report one more time, a particular part of it that CNN published, because there is more and more recognition of exactly what you said. Because in this reversal, the halting of any kind of invasion plan, this is all within the last month, all the way up until this announcement that we have an imminent deal coming, or a so-called deal, because as we said, the U.S.'s word is really not much. But according to CNN, U.S. military planners had assessed that a ground operation on Iran would carry a high to extreme level of risk.

They say the mission would have required hundreds of special operations forces, a large military presence on the ground to locate, secure, and remove uranium stored inside heavily fortified underground tunnels. One source described the challenge by saying that the U.S. would essentially have to invade Iran. While intelligence reportedly believes it knows the location of Iran's uranium stockpile, nuclear experts cited by CNN questioned whether the material could realistically be identified, secured, and removed under combat conditions. Another source reported that U.S. intelligence warned of major global and economic consequences if the ground invasion were launched.

And that Iran would coordinate with Yemen's Ansar Allah to close the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, another critical shipping route. So it seems like all of this was the perfect storm, which has led to the U.S. for now trying to find—and I believe this is what the United States is doing—they're trying to find a way to take a breather, to pause this thing because they do not have the capacity to affect any change on the battlefield. And according to some reports, the U.S. is running out of its oil reserves. They have been pumping this out into the market for weeks and weeks and weeks, and it's about to be out. So it seems like the timing is right here to try to catch a breather. But what do you think?

#KJ Noh

Yes, I think definitely the U.S. is looking for a breather. I mean, essentially, to put it metaphorically, Iran has put the U.S. and its allies in a chokehold. And the U.S. is flailing and trying to break that chokehold. It cannot do that. And now it's trying to talk its way out, trying to get a breather, see if it can kind of reverse the situation completely. It's not going to happen. You know, the Strait of Hormuz is fundamentally—I mean, essentially, Iran has said that it's our sovereign area along with Iran. They're not going to give that up. And that is a fundamental leverage that will not change.

That is just kind of a geostrategic reality, a geoeconomic reality. And then, you know, the fact of oil reserves depleting—they're depleting all around the world. You know, this is the point at which the impacts are starting to be felt. You know, it's like you take a medication—sometimes it takes a little time for the medication to hit you. Well, this is, you know, the lack of oil, those effects are now starting to be felt. Indonesia is now having riots. You know, the price of oil went up 30 percent, and now they have riots. You know, the country is being destabilized, and we can expect more of this all over the world.

And as others have said before, it's not simply oil. It's not simply diesel. It's not simply natural gas. It is the fact that the entire capitalist economy, industrial capitalist economies, are built on hydrocarbons, especially the feedstock. So talking about sulfur, we're talking about, you know, urea and ammonia for industrial fertilizers. We're talking about naphtha. Naphtha—everything that is plastic in your house probably has naphtha as a feedstock. Every piece of electrical wiring that is insulated has started from naphtha. And I've heard people say, well, yeah, it's good, we're going to get rid of plastics.

No, you are dematerializing the planet. You know, your house has a mile of electrical wiring. Your car has three miles of electrical wiring. All of that is insulated with plastics that come from naphtha. And so these are catastrophic, uh, catastrophic feedback effects that are starting to kick in. And the administration simply doesn't seem to understand that real estate lawyers don't understand supply chains. But anyone who knows anything about industry and industrial engineering understands that you cannot choke off hydrocarbons, a fifth of the hydrocarbons of the planet, and not expect that to have catastrophic effects all over the planet.

#Danny

Yeah, and a huge problem is going to be presented for the United States when there is an acknowledgment and a recognition, which we've seen a few times, that Iran is not going to give up. Not only will it not give up the regulatory mechanism it has over the Strait of Hormuz, but it's made very clear that this fee—it's calling it a service fee now. The United States insists that any quote-unquote tolls will not be tolerated, but only Iran right now has the power to regulate the Strait of Hormuz, because it's only Iran that is—and of course, in part, Oman as well, where the Strait of Hormuz hugs its border. So the United States is already at a fundamental disadvantage.

And I think it exposes how it really is the U.S. military, Navy, its imperial authority apparatus that has to go in and try to dictate terms. That model seems to not be working anymore. And I think Iran is a huge example of this, but it certainly isn't the only example of this, where it is virtually impossible for the United States to meet its objectives militarily any longer. And I think this is why there is such disarray around this particular war, KJ. But what do you say about that and the broader consequences? Because I definitely want to get into—there are some very interesting developments happening in terms of where the U.S. might be shifting its focus after it gets its breather with Iran, if it does.

#KJ Noh

Well, I think that's the key point, is the U.S. cannot meet or achieve any of its strategic goals. Of course, it can tactically do damage. It can hurt the Iranian people. It can destroy tens of thousands of buildings, including schools with young schoolchildren, teacher schools, etc. All of these things can be done. It can destroy civilian infrastructure and reservoirs and water purification, etc. All of these things can be done, but that does not mean that it can win. Strategically, it cannot achieve any of its goals. Iran has strategic dominance. It has escalation dominance. And they have said that they are simply seeking to lock in their battlefield successes in writing in this agreement. So I think that's very clear.

Iran knows what its strengths are, and it knows that the U.S. is on the back foot. And it also knows, and it is insisting, that it will control the Strait of Hormuz. Now, you know, once again, the Strait of Hormuz is one of the core arteries of hydrocarbons, which essentially is like the carotid artery of the human body. It's essential that it has to flow in order for the global body politic and economy to be healthy. Iran originally had proposed somewhere in the range of \$1 per barrel as kind of an exit fee or a toll. If you do the calculation on that, that amounts to, depending on how much of that barrel becomes, for example, gasoline as opposed to other products, you're looking at somewhere between two to four cents per gallon.

Now, you know, if you live in California, you're paying already, you know, multiples of that in taxes to the state already. And since the war broke out, people are paying two, three extra dollars per gallon. So would you rather pay two dollars extra per gallon, or would you rather pay two cents per gallon? It's a no-brainer. And Iran has not ratified UNCLOS as far as they're concerned. And as far as international law is concerned, at least half of the strait is Iranian territorial waters. There's no way around that. It's the law, but it is also geographic reality. And it is also military reality. Nothing can change those facts on the ground. So if we understand that to be the case, then yes, I think that there is a reasonable case to be made that Iran can impose some kind of management fee.

And they do what, for example, we do in California. The California legislature has said that all California UC universities, state universities, have to be free. But they're not free. And so instead of charging tuition, they call it, you know, they just call them like special fees. They call them fees.

They can't use the word tuition. And so they call them, you know, fees. And then they, you know, pile them up. But, you know, if it's just a matter of nomenclature, yes, find the right nomenclature, but make it work so that the entire global economy does not collapse and that we find some reasonable accommodation. Nobody wants this war, and certainly nobody on the street, none of the people, want the war or its effects.

#Danny

Yeah, and the numbers just keep getting worse for Donald Trump. So no doubt it is the Trump administration, Trump and this part of the warmongering elite that really requires some kind of pause now, if anything, to get people's attention away from this growing link between the declining living standards, the huge drop in the capacity to live in the United States, this high cost of living that's only gone up in the last month. And in large part, people are connecting the dots that it is this war that is causing this big economic problem, this kind of ball and chain that only gets heavier and heavier around their feet. Now, KJ, there appears to be—because we've talked about it many times on this program—we both have been in agreement that the United States has been plunging as an empire toward a kind of World War III scenario.

And it seems like every time there is a kind of pause or an attempt to pause—because I don't actually have faith that the war on Iran will go through any meaningful pause—but according to the Associated Press, there appears to be, now we've known for a while that the United States has been wanting to reduce its foothold in parts of Europe and move those resources to other theaters. And now it seems like NATO, under U.S. direction, is reducing the number of planned forces, including warships and aircraft, that it would provide in the case of any security crisis, warning last month that it needs to focus on threats elsewhere, like China in the Indo-Pacific.

So, again, this is all happening in the context of this so-called deal. The United States got really, and is really, bogged down in West Asia and the Middle East again. But it seems like there is still a huge move to try to address the rest of the Asia-Pacific theater, which is indelibly all about China. So what do you make of this? Because we also have a lot to talk about with Korea, and especially North Korea, now that it is becoming far more under the microscope of U.S. pundits, especially the think tanks. But your thoughts first on this.

#KJ Noh

You know, the Western Atlantic Empire—that is, you know, Europe and the United States—is parasitic on constant and consistent extraction from the Global South. It essentially is a parasitic neocolonial relationship. And when China arose, it broke that mold of neocolonial subjugation. And as China increases its economic and political capacity, it is creating a force field that allows other countries more choice and eventually the capacity to break away from this imperial system. So they

are dead set on taking China down. They believe that they have to destroy China in order to maintain their, quote-unquote, unipolar global hegemony. And so I've always said that this is a three-course meal. The main dish is China.

They want to destroy China because China is the key gravitational force for the multipolar world. And then, of course, the appetizer was supposed to be Russia, and Iran was supposed to be the dessert. The appetizer was going to be a drive-by. You know, essentially, Russia was a gas station with pretensions, and they were just going to, you know, walk over it. And then they would wage war with China, and then they would clean up Iran as an afterthought. That didn't work out so well because the first dish they started to choke on turned out to be flounder. And then Iran got re-sequenced, probably because of neocon pressures. And the battle plan that they have against Iran is actually very similar to the battle plan that they have for China, which is called Air-Sea Battle.

Essentially, it's a blinding and decapitation attack. Now, they've shown proof of concept with Iran that it does not work with a middle power. So how are they going to wage war against China, which is a superpower, which is exponentially more powerful than Iran? Have they come to their senses? Are they going to dial this down? Well, nothing indicates that. And as you just pointed out in that article, this notion that they are essentially re-diverting so that they can focus on the key war, the key enemy, which is China, shows that they haven't learned anything. They haven't changed anything yet. The leopard has not changed its spots. Of course, they're re-strategizing in the Shangri-La Dialogue. Pete Hegseth, instead of naming China and Taiwan, he spoke about the first island chain.

It's all the same thing. The first island chain is this wall of missiles that they've surrounded China with. And the idea about the first island chain is they're saying to China, essentially, from a military standpoint, we are playing a full-court press. You're not even going to get the ball onto the court because we are right up against your nose. From the Kurils, through the Japanese archipelago, Jeju Island, across the Okinawan archipelago, across with Taiwan as the centerpiece, and then down through the Philippine archipelago, and then all the way to Borneo and Malaysia. That entire area has been militarized up the wazoo and is being prepared for war. And you see, if you read the position papers, you see the constant drumbeat for war in all the major think tanks.

#Danny

Yeah, there definitely is a major drumbeat. I wanted to now... because I think a lot has been made of how China and Iran have gotten closer, and in part Russia and Iran, in order to challenge this drive by the United States to destroy them all, pick them off in the order that you described. But there's another development occurring basically right under the U.S.'s nose as it remains very much focused on Iran and seemingly, for all intents and purposes and measures, has failed in its effort to destroy Iran.

But now we've seen last week that China's President Xi Jinping was in the DPRK for a really important visit. That really flew under the radar because of the escalation that the U.S. was mounting with Iran in the lead-up to this so-called deal. Now, this came after China met with Vladimir Putin in Beijing. And then, of course, there was the Trump visit. But this visit came very soon after those. And I just want to play what CBS said about this, KJ, because I think it's instructive in seeing how the U.S. media, especially mainstream media, covers these kinds of things.

#CBS News 1

Welcome back. China's leader, Xi Jinping, has wrapped up a two-day visit to North Korea. This is the first time he's been in the country in seven years. The trip included this red carpet welcome for the Chinese president, as well as a bilateral meeting and public appearances with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. CBS News foreign correspondent Anna Coren is following this for us from Hong Kong. Anna, good morning to you. How are China and North Korea describing this visit?

#CBS News 2

Look, officially, they certainly are vowing to deepen ties and expand cooperation. Look, this summit has been a reset in relations following years of tension between the two countries, really over North Korea's nuclear weapons program. But there was no mention of that, at least publicly, on this trip. Instead, they discussed economic, trade, and defense partnerships with messages of solidarity and anti-U.S. sentiment. Kim described the relationship as rock solid. Xi called on both sides to firmly defend their respective sovereignty, security, and development interests. Xi was there with his wife, Peng Liyuan. They were warmly greeted by Kim and his wife, Ri Sol-ju. As you say, it was their first visit to Pyongyang in seven years.

There were flag-lined streets, cheering crowds, an honor guard, and giant portraits of both leaders. Later, they attended a performance of Chinese and North Korean revolutionary patriotic songs before a state banquet. But Xi's visit is also seen as a counterbalance to Russian influence that really has grown stronger since the war in Ukraine. In exchange for weapons and thousands of North Korean troops, Russia has given Pyongyang desperately needed financial assistance. And it has also recognized North Korea as a nuclear-armed state, giving Kim, you know, the confidence as he doubles down on the expansion of his nuclear weapons program, which, Errol, is considered far more advanced than Iran's.

#Danny

So, KJ, I mean, I find that to be very interesting. It's always interesting framing because generally there has to be some kind of major rivalry still happening between Russia, China, and North Korea. But even just those images of the visit were very instructive — I mean, very warm. And all of this came under the radar, and now there's a flurry of articles. The Hudson Institute, these think tanks,

are talking about the DPRK. There are some who are calling Iran a fourth great power. Now people are talking about North Korea inside these think tanks as gaining huge ground in not just being able to sustain itself and survive, but to be a major player in this developing world led by Iran, China, and Russia. What do you make of these developments, and how much does this failure in Iran have to do with this?

#KJ Noh

Well, I think it has a lot to do with it, and it also ties into the fact that people are starting to get small glimpses of what the world is really like. First thing to understand about North Korea: it is the world's longest-existing socialist state. It outlasted the Soviet Union by, at this point, close to a decade. It is a technological powerhouse. People don't understand this. And until 1979, it was actually richer than South Korea. People always think of South Korea as being, you know, this kind of model state, a model capitalist democracy. No, no. Until 1979, North Korea was actually wealthier and certainly more developed. And one could argue, you know, that it was a better place than South Korea.

South Korea in the 60s and 70s was a hellscape, a neocolonial hellscape. Essentially, the U.S. came in after the Japanese colonized it, and they became the successor colonizers. And they essentially waged a genocide there in order to purge the South of all progressive, leftist, and communist elements, very similar to what happened in Indonesia. And then they waged a genocidal war for three years in which they killed, what, four million people — one third of the population killed. I often tell people, you know, look at Gaza, what happened to Gaza — the bombing, the mass, you know, genocide — and multiply that over an area 700 times that size, and you have a tiny glimpse of what North Korea went through. But still, it was not destroyed. It stood strong. And it has always had strong relationships with China.

Once again, something people don't understand. Without Korea, there would be no People's Republic of China, because the Koreans and the Chinese fought in the civil war together against both the Japanese and the KMT. And having liberated the PRC, the Koreans who had fought in the Chinese civil war came to North Korea, and they tried to defend it against the continual U.S. encroachment and expansion. Most people have tremendous misunderstandings of North Korea. But the first thing to understand is that North Korea and China historically have been very close. And politically, their relationships have always been close. Mao used the formulation "closer than lips to teeth."

Chairman Mao's beloved son was actually buried in North Korea because his son went and fought in the Korean War, and he was hit by napalm and singed to a crisp. But North Korea is the only country that China has a mutual defense treaty with, which is still in place to this day. And, for example, when Kim Jong-un visits China, even during, you know, the Spring Festival, China will stop all the other trains so that Kim Jong-un can take his train, you know, through the country. For example,

when he was going to Vietnam, it's like, you know, Moses parting the sea, literally, you know. So people misunderstand. They misunderstand the relationship between North Korea and China, which is very, very close.

And this most recent meeting emphasized not simply the closeness of their history, but also that they were going to deepen and strengthen strategic communication and coordination there, and also uphold the international system and promote an equal and orderly multipolarization of the world. Essentially, they're saying we're, you know, putting our arms together and we're going to fight or resist the empire and move it towards a more equal, sovereign structure of, you know, multilateral states. So I think that's very clear. And I think once again, the emphasis in the meeting was not simply on cultural events and, you know, good feelings, but on strategic coordination. And that signals to you that China is very, very aware that the U.S. is continuing to escalate toward war in East Asia and all across the first island chain. Danny, I think you're muted.

#Danny

Sorry about that, everyone. Yeah, but most definitely. Many people may not know, KJ, that the Wall Street Journal actually published a piece recently about how North Korea, the DPRK, is the world's most surprising economic success story. And I just found it so interesting that oftentimes the DPRK is framed as having tensions with China around the so-called nuclear issue. But on the other hand, now even the Wall Street Journal has to admit that this partnership between them has only boosted North Korea, the DPRK's ability to not just survive, but to thrive. They were talking about having QR code payment systems similar to China's. They were talking about EVs, Chinese-produced, are everywhere.

I think there was a number in there that was pretty staggering — that the country had built, or I think it was Pyongyang, the capital, had built more new housing than Chicago and Los Angeles in the United States. And for those who don't know, those are two massive cities in the United States. So these are pretty staggering numbers. And they demonstrate something similar to, I think, what's happening with Iran, which is, it seems like these countries on the periphery that have generally been seen as next on the menu have started to find more and more breathing room to develop themselves and then to build these partnerships with countries that are just inherently bigger and have had maybe certain advantages that they haven't been able to have — like China's ability to be in the world economic system for decades now.

But nonetheless, I found this article in Newsweek to be really important because to frame this as like this great power game, it reinforces, of course, the great power confrontation of the United States against Russia and China, and the DPRK being put into that. They also named this the Beijing-Moscow-Pyongyang axis — a kind of another nod that the Hudson Institute is starting to put together toward an alliance that is a big threat to the United States. And the United States, KJ, you can speak to this, has also been under the radar boosting its defense partnership, quote-unquote, if we can call it that, with South Korea. And this has been condemned by the DPRK in recent days. And

I'm sure that China, Russia, and the DPRK have been making comments about this escalating militarization of the U.S., especially vis-à-vis South Korea and Japan, too. So what are your thoughts on this? How does this all relate to each other?

#KJ Noh

It is all related, and I think it's very important for us to look at the big picture. Sometimes we can get too stuck on one region and not see the total development on the board. Certainly, China, Russia, and the DPRK are, you know, they are important. They're important examples of resistance to the Western Empire, most notably North Korea. You know, once again, North Korea had somewhere between one-fifth to one-third of its population wiped out during the Korean War and actually the multiple genocides leading up to the Korean War. So under those circumstances, it's hard to imagine a country coming back from that. You know, countries that have, you know, one-third of their population genocided, they don't usually do very well.

But as I said, North Korea developed faster than South Korea until the mid-1970s. This was because, among other things, they had really implemented socialist planning, and they had a government that was actually working to develop the country, as opposed to South Korea, which was a hotbed of corruption and graft and essentially neocolonial exploitation. Currently, they had a very, very difficult time in the post-Soviet era, especially during the 1990s, what they call the Arduous March, when, as we see with Cuba right now, U.S. sanctions were so extreme that it almost resulted in famine and untold numbers of people's struggles, suffering, and starvation. But since that point, they have come back, and they're making leaps and bounds in development. You can see the economy soaring.

Just a few years back, even when North Korea was one of the poorest countries on the planet, it was punching a hundred rankings above its expected life expectancy because it was, you know, it was doing the right things. I mean, for example, it has a longer life expectancy than the Philippines when, you know, they're supposed to be not even close in terms of economic development. So North Korea, I think, you know, is one of the countries that has shown over decades that it can resist the empire and go toe to toe. And Iran is, you know, the latest example, literally showing that they can strategically defeat the United States. And all of this shows that, you know, multipolarism and the burgeoning multipolar world, you know, are developing in ways that are very concrete, tangible, and visible so that even, you know, the elite journals of propaganda have to acknowledge this.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah, that's definitely the case. It seems that there's no way to deny any longer that the United States just cannot throw its weight around anymore and expect to effect the full-spectrum dominance that it seeks. There are major challenges right now, too, that are building up. And with Iran, we saw that build up into a major global crisis. But all of this is cumulative, and there are a lot of things that we aren't seeing, or at least that we aren't having our eyes directed toward, which will also continue to develop. And I think the DPRK's capacity to not just become a resilient country that

can survive under the gun of just brutal economic sanctions and the threat of war, but also to advance through that process.

And so in that way, Iran, Russia, and China too—China is also facing lots of major threats to its security and its economy vis-à-vis the United States. But all of them are moving in a very progressive direction, economically, militarily, etc. But, you know, KJ, there is something that's also flying under the radar. There were major strikes in Nigeria by the United States Africa Command, U.S. Africa Command, the day before yesterday, I believe it was. And now Trump has just announced that he has—and all of this is just absolute folly—he has assassinated, on Venezuelan territory, a so-called leader of the Tren de Aragua, which I thought was fake at this point and completely made up.

But nonetheless, there was a military strike on a supposed cartel leader inside of Venezuela, released by the Trump administration on the eve of this so-called deal with Iran that's coming up. And it signals that the United States military is now operating inside of Venezuelan territory. And Trump has touted Venezuela over and over and over again as really the singular—I mean, he claims that Iran is destroyed, that Iran is completely obliterated—everything: army, navy, destroyed, you name it, missiles, drones, all obliterated. But Venezuela has been his single foreign policy achievement that he's been touting. What do you make of this development? It seems like another further example that, yeah, the United States is certainly looking to escalate, shift gears, and, you know, take part in many different theaters at the same time.

#KJ Noh

Well, you know, as the empire becomes weaker, it increases the number of performative atrocities that it conducts. And so I expect to see more of this. You know, there will be more attacks—gratuitous, unsubstantiated, unjustified killings, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. I think that we can expect this to continue, but I also think that it signals deep fear, loathing, and weakness on the part of the empire. If they could, they would do that to North Korea, to Iran, to China. But since they can't, they will, you know, they will satisfy themselves with brutalizing and, you know, beating whichever weak or weaker party they can get their hands on, including the quote-unquote allies of the United States.

I just want to come back to Korea for a moment because we discussed that. As I said, North Korea has resisted U.S. imperialism in an extraordinary fashion. And it essentially had to build a maroon society in order to do that—tremendously isolated, but also tremendously disciplined and martial in its outlook, and at the same time tremendously developed. It's, you know, I sometimes refer to it as the original Wakanda, you know, kind of a secretive state that nobody really knows about, but which has tremendous technologies and is capable of defending itself. In fact, I think Kathleen Cleaver gave birth to her daughter in North Korea. Joju Young is actually—her daughter was born in North Korea. She referred to it as a kind of communist or East Asian Switzerland.

It was so developed. It was kind of a model of what, you know, a model society could be. All of that is much older history, but Korea has always served as the proxy for U.S. power projection in East Asia. During the Vietnam War, 320,000 Korean troops fought as vassals for the United States, during which they committed untold atrocities. You know, when the U.S. went into Afghanistan, the South Korean troops were in there with them right from the get-go. And right now, as the U.S. is waging a proxy war using Ukraine against Russia, South Korea has been the quartermaster to that war. They've sent more munitions than the entirety of the EU. And Korean defense companies are collaborating with Israeli and American defense companies also.

So the U.S. sees its industrial supply as weak inside the U.S. itself, but they want to outsource that industrial supply chain to South Korea and to Japan and, to a certain extent, India. And so all of these things have, you know, large... These are large strategies. But the U.S. controls South Korea's military. South Korea has about 500,000 troops ready to fight, highly trained. And then it has another 3.1 million reserve troops also ready to fight. It's one of the largest military manpower capacities on the planet—3.6 million troops. Why is this important? Well, the U.S. has operational control over all South Korean troops, as well as their materiel, as well as all their bases, etc.

Now, the U.S. technically pretends that it doesn't have operational control over South Korean troops because it says, you know, we only have wartime operational control, which is a nonsense statement. Because operations actually mean war or warfighting. So to say that we only have wartime warfighting control is a, you know, it's a pleonasm. It's a tautology. But essentially, anytime the U.S. wants, it just says the magic words—two words—DEFCON 3. And then it gets control over all of South Korea's military and its materiel. And it's very, very clear that it has been preparing this in alliance with Japan, in alliance with the Philippines, using Taiwan as a trigger and Korea as another trigger to stoke and escalate towards war against China.

Korea is very, very important in this. And this is why last year, the president of South Korea, Yoon Seok-youl, almost got away with declaring martial law. He's just recently gotten another 30 years added to his sentence. He's been arrested and has been sentenced to life, but he just got another 30 years piled on for attacking North Korea and trying to trigger a war. But if that war had happened again, the United States would have taken operational control. South Korea would have reverted to being a military dictatorship, as it was for most of its time as a para-colonial U.S. state. And then that force projection and force multiplication would have been used to escalate against China.

Currently, there is a president in South Korea who's a progressive, Lee Jae-myung. He wants to wrest back operational control. He wants to reclaim South Korea's sovereignty. But I think he is severely hamstrung, so he's walking a very, very tight and narrow path. I would say even a minefield. And he's trying to navigate a way to get South Korea a little bit more autonomy and less pressure, and to be less implicated in the U.S. wars. Until recently, there were mass demonstrations

in the streets in South Korea protesting against a South Korean deployment to Iran, because the Koreans, having seen this over and over again, were afraid that the South Korean military was going to be dispatched as land troops to Iran.

And so Korean citizens were on the streets saying, you know, no deployment, no second Vietnam, you know. So all of this is to say Korea is very, very important. Japan is very, very important. Sanae Takaichi is currently re-militarizing the country. She's discarded, you know, the Article 9 peace treaty. And she has said that she would get involved in any, quote-unquote, Taiwan contingency, as if what is going on in China's own territory is any of its business. But you see that the pieces have been placed in very strategic and very, very threatening positions. So all of this lets us know that we are not out of the woods. And even if there is de-escalation in West Asia, you can expect that there will be further escalation in East Asia.

#Danny

Yeah, those are great points, KJ. Now, just a few audience questions before we wrap up here. I want to pull up this one. I think it's a good one. KJ and Danny, is demand destruction an unrecognized factor in oil prices remaining lower than expected? During the Great Depression, demand dropped to where producing commodities wasn't profitable. Now, there's also—I'll just throw this in there—there are some economists, these are mainstream, these are people coming out of the likes of Goldman Sachs and the like, who are crediting, they're saying, crediting the U.S.'s operation of guiding ships out of the Strait of Hormuz under darkness, turning off their transponders and guiding them out of the Persian Gulf, as partly responsible for this. But I'm curious on your thoughts, whether there are a lot of people who are questioning that narrative, given the lack of proof that any ships have actually left because of this kind of activity. But your thoughts on what Sparky had to say there.

#KJ Noh

Well, I mean, the first thing is Iran is shooting down stealth fighters. They're shooting down F-35s. I think it's foolhardy to think that they're not able to shoot down a slow-moving tanker moving at the speed of a bicycle in its front yard, where they have an amphitheater looking down over the entire Gulf. So I think that is highly, highly unlikely. Now, I would argue that demand destruction is not as simple as it seems, simply because the demand for hydrocarbons is inelastic. As I said before, industrial capitalism is built on a hydrocarbon supply chain. If you remove hydrocarbons, of course, over the long term—and this is the cunning of history, the cunning of reason, if you will—Donald Trump is probably doing more to decarbonize the planet than any other U.S. president or U.S. activist or U.S. organization.

I mean, he makes Al Gore look like a piker. But I think the key thing we have to understand is that, as it stands currently, petroleum and hydrocarbons are not easily substitutable. And over the long term, this is an incentive for countries to decarbonize. And we start to see that with, you know,

rising use of EVs and sustainable energy generation, which China is providing to the world in particular. With sustainable energy generation methodologies, it's almost a global good. So that is a very, very positive development. But in the short term, I think we can expect tremendous pain, tremendous chaos, tremendous disturbance. It's not cut and dried.

#Danny

Yes, and then the final question, which I don't know if it was rhetorical, but it's from a Patreon subscriber, which you can all check out in the video description. But Rosemary from Patreon asks, war against China, which supplies the world with wanted goods and does not attack anyone—why? I don't know if that was rhetorical or not, but I thought it was a good point and one that I questioned that could actually also be answered if not rhetorical. So, KJ, your thoughts on that?

#KJ Noh

China is—the U.S. has been planning war against China explicitly since 2009, when it actually drafted plans for war. This is called Air-Sea Battle. This was drafted in 2009. A few years later, it was incorporated into the Quadrennial Defense Review. It is essentially doctrine. And you see it in appropriations, legislation—everything is about war with China. Air-Sea Battle itself has been revised, if I'm not mistaken, about 11 times. And as I said, Air-Sea Battle was the doctrine of war used against Iran in the early stages of the Ramadan War. The colloquial term for Air-Sea Battle, which actually comes from Air-Land Battle—the colloquial term for it is “shock and awe.” The U.S. had a shock and awe plan of war against China, which it's had on the shelf for at least 17 years.

But even before that, going back to the 1990s and the early parts of the Bush administration in the 2000s, the U.S. was itching for war with China. So, you know, as Rosemary says, you know, why go to war against China? This is a complex question, but essentially China challenges the Western Imperium's control over the planet. As I said, this is a parasitic relationship. The West gets somewhere in the range of two to five trillion dollars every single year in unequal exchange. Essentially, it's sucking the Global South dry. The Global South is impoverished not because it's poor, but because it has been underdeveloped, extracted, and systematically underdeveloped, extracted, and exploited.

China is challenging that. And when you challenge that, the ruling imperial elite will go to war to prevent that at any cost. China isn't a threat to anybody, except that it's a threat of a good example—that a country can develop on its own terms without becoming a military threat to the rest of the world. It can defend itself, but it hasn't invaded any country since, you know, at least half a century—1979. And just the fact that China poses this counterexample of a country and a system that has escaped the gravitational force of capitalism means that it has to be destroyed. Now, the year 2009 is actually important because this is when the plans for war were actually drawn up.

Prior to 2009, there were different camps, what they called panda sluggers and panda huggers. But the general idea among the panda huggers, those who were engaging with China, was that China could be coaxed into becoming a tenant farmer on the capitalist plantation, that it would just remain, you know, as a cheap workshop and essentially let itself be extracted from. And if it didn't do that, and if it didn't become capitalist and part of the capitalist— a capitalist subaltern in the capitalist system— it would simply implode. And so there was a collapseist thinking and also an absorptionist thinking on the part of the U.S. ruling class. Hillary Clinton said China was a Potemkin state every single year.

The economists would predict its immediate demise, et cetera. And then what happened in 2008 was the global capitalist financial system collapsed. It collapsed around its own ears. And the only country that was left standing, because it was not directly connected to that system, was China. And China has shown that you can develop on your own terms without becoming more capitalist, more hydrocarbon-intensive, more violent, more imperialist. That example is not allowed to stand. And so when China didn't collapse, but the West almost did in 2008 in the financial collapse, that's when the daggers came out. And that's when the plan for explicit war against China was drafted.

And so we're seeing this in the current moment. We're seeing over a decade and a half of constant hybrid war, constant demonization, constant lies, propaganda, etc. And, you know, it just never ends. And anytime China does something beneficial, it's always framed as a threat. At what cost? You know, China releases AI to the world as a global public good and as part of the global intellectual commons. And now Foreign Affairs is writing an article saying China has stolen all its AI from the United States — you know, "China's AI heist." China creates solar panels for the rest of the planet, and they're all made with slave labor. And China is creating a systematic imbalance in the global economic system.

This oversupply and overproduction is, you know, turning the global economic system into chaos. I mean, all of this is nonsense. It has to do with the fact that capitalism in its monopoly stage does three things. It inshittifies, it gouges—I mean, think of all the different ways you're being gouged—and then it also financializes. So it seeks rentier profits and it just creates money out of thin air. All the crypto bros thinking they can just create money out of thin air—all of that speaks to the fundamental contradictions of capitalism. And because of that, it is losing and it's undermining itself against a planned industrial economy. But that is something that is intolerable. And so there is this last gasp effort to destroy all challenges to global capital.

And that entails waging hybrid information, lawfare, economic warfare, sanctions warfare, all manner of dirty war and hybrid war against all the countries that are trying to resist this. This is why you see all the color revolutions in Eastern Europe, all the takedowns of leaders in Southeast Asia and along China's periphery. Any country that has even moderately good relations with China is in the crosshairs. And I would also say Korea right now is in the crosshairs as well. And so this is a kind of global hybrid war that we're living right now. And at the same time, we are being constantly

impoverished. Our lives are being inshittified and immiserated. And the fundamental question that we have to ask ourselves is, is this okay? And if it's not okay, what are we going to do about it? That's the fundamental question that we have to ask ourselves.

#Danny

Yes, and I think that's a great place to close here. Everyone, give a big thank you to KJ Noh for joining the show by hitting the like button, because that will spread this video far and wide long after we've ended here. Also, in the video description, you can find all the places to support this channel—Patreon, Substack, and much more. I want to give a big thank you to everyone else who gave support, super chats, or super stickers for your comments today, for everyone in the chat, everyone who viewed. And of course, the moderators—I believe there was Where Where Pilgrim. Forgive me if I forgot anybody else who was moderating the chat today. All the members as well, essentially everybody who's watching, thank you so much. Tomorrow, no live stream, but I will have a video clip coming out, original. I'll let you know when that is coming out. Without further ado, everyone, I want to say thank you so much, and I will see you all again very soon. Until next time.