

Pepe Escobar: Trump CAVES to Iran Strike Threat, Israel FURIOUS – Is War OVER?

Geopolitical analyst and independent journalist Pepe Escobar joins the show to discuss the announcement by Trump & Iran that a deal to end the war, and the Iranian strike threat which accelerated Trump's desperation to seal it. Pepe Escobar is a geopolitical analyst and independent journalist. Follow him at Telegram: <https://t.me/rocknrollgeopolitics> and X: <https://x.com/RealPepeEscobar> and on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@Transition_Protocol PATREON.COM /DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai...> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> Follow me on Telegram: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong>

#Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I am joined by Pepe Escobar, independent journalist and geopolitical analyst. Pepe, good to see you again. How are you?

#Pepe Escobar

Good to see you again, Danny. Congratulations on everything. Greetings to our audience. And I am in hell at the moment because I am in Meitostølen.

#Danny

Yeah. Well, thank you for joining us from hell, Pepe. My pleasure. We do appreciate your time. Let's get started with the big news, which comes—I'll just outline the scenario that occurred yesterday. We had a flurry of developments. We had Israel striking Beirut, bombing Lebanon—still bombing Lebanon, to be quite honest. But in this strike on Lebanon, Iran said that it was going to retaliate. Trump, it appears, was very keen on not letting this happen—essentially, it was a panic attack—negotiating with Iran, gave a lot of newer concessions, for example, lifting the blockade immediately.

And now we have the memorandum of understanding that was signed later in the evening yesterday. Now, Pepe, I know you have a column coming out on this. Maybe you can help us understand why it was now that the strike that Israel conducted—of course, Iran has already struck Israel over its attacks on Lebanon—and now it seems like this particular threat led to an actual agreement. Again, the memorandum of understanding, not a peace deal. But maybe you can help us understand what happened and why it happened.

#Pepe Escobar

Right. This column is probably coming out Tuesday. Okay. I try to detail, with background as well, the information that we had from our Iranian and Pakistani sources for the past almost three weeks. There's an important contextualization for you, Danny, and for our audience. What is now—the Iranians are billing it as the Islamabad Understandings or Memorandum. It was called the Islamabad Accord by the Pakistanis themselves. And we broke the story of the Islamabad Accord, Larry Johnson and I, on a previous channel. It was called Power Shift. And after we had two breaking news pieces back to back, it was simply canceled by a direct order from the U.S. government to Google.

Shut them down with no warning, nothing whatsoever. We had two shows, one on a Tuesday, one on a Friday. And over the weekend, our channel was shut down. Last week, we came back with a new channel. It's called Transition Protocol. And on Friday last week, Larry and I, in our new, still small channel—we have to start all over again—we broke the story that the MOU was practically a done deal. And why could we break that? Because our sources are directly from the table. They are Pakistani mediators. And that's the reason why Larry and I are engaged in this project.

Because we are probably—there are very, very few, or practically no analysts anywhere—who have information directly from the table by the Pakistanis. And of course, this information can later be confronted and presented to the Iranians, and they say yes, no, no comments, etc. And that's why we are involved. So we knew that an Islamabad Accord was practically a done deal, barring last-minute alterations by the American side, which is exactly what happened this weekend. So this weekend, Araghchi—very few people know that—he was on a secret mission in Pakistan. Araghchi spent the weekend in Islamabad discussing with the mediators and basically telling, once again, the Trump administration, look, we have already given you two very important demands, two weeks ago at least.

Number one, we're not going to discuss the Iranian nuclear dossier before any formal ending of the war—not only the war against us, but the war of Israel against Lebanon. And number two, if you insist on crossing thresholds and if you insist on imposing other headlines on us, we're going to attack Israel directly. And they were locked and loaded to attack Israel this weekend, from Saturday to Sunday. They were about to do it. So this was the straw that broke the camel's back. He finally understood that the Iranians were very, very, very serious, and they wouldn't wait for anything, and they would go for broke against Israel.

So this was the main reason why we had—well, they say there is an electronic signing. The Iranians did not confirm that there was an electronic signing by Ghalibaf especially. The Americans are saying that Trump and Vance already signed it electronically. The Iranians so far have left it hanging in the air. Basically, they were saying a very important statement by the Supreme National Security

Council, which I include in my column. They say that they will sign only after the definitive order by Leader Mostafa Khamenei. So we may assume that this is still in the air, right? And it would happen, let's say, within the next 48 hours—so between today and maybe tomorrow night, right?

And, of course, this all relates to what's going to be announced officially on the 19th, Friday, in Geneva. So a lot of stuff can happen from now to the 19th, especially after another derailment attempt by the desk out in West Asia. And once again, the Iranians told the Americans, look, if you sign and if we sign the MOU with us, we will deal with the Israelis by ourselves. And the Americans more or less are admitting that once the MOU is signed, Israel is on its own. If they want to derail it, Iran is going to respond to them, and the Americans won't do anything to prevent it. So that changes the equation completely. But Danny, this is all very much in the air, right?

We are still in an I said, he said phase. From now to the next three, four days, it's very, very tricky. Once we have this formal announcement on Friday, that changes the equation, because then we're going to have the full terms of the MOU, and the Iranians are promising within the next 48 hours to reveal all the points. Because so far, this is also important, Arashi has been taking Himalayan amounts of flak in Iran, because a lot of people are accusing him of selling out. Of course, they still don't know the full terms. And the terms changed drastically this weekend, as you mentioned in the beginning. Trump made extra concessions, but these are not extra concessions.

This is something that he had agreed to previously. But then he started once again to make extra demands and change the terms that were agreed on over two weeks ago. So it's back to where we were in the beginning, when the Islamabad Accord, as it was described, was on the verge of being signed. And we also had confirmation that—I discussed this with Larry as well—Trump had six opportunities to sign this deal within the last two to three weeks. And at the last minute, he came up with something different. The whole thing was already written, just needed to be signed. Six times. And this weekend, we probably had the seventh. And he couldn't escape it anymore.

Because the Iranians said, look, that's it. This is our deadline. And among the deadlines, the Iranians were saying, look, the money—you have to disburse the money that you owe us by the end of this month. If you don't, you're going to be in trouble. So that explains, among other things, why there was once again that famous Emirati plane landing in Tehran with lots of cash inside, which was part of the UAE payment for Iran to please don't bomb us. And once again, the Pakistanis—we got this information from the table—the Pakistanis told us, look, we brokered this plane, a UAE flight to Tehran to pay \$2 billion in cash. So the thing was advancing.

And this weekend, we had everything in place for the signing of the MOU. And at the last minute, Trump tried to change it, probably for the last time, because now it's theoretically a done deal. But we still have all these days until Friday for the final confirmation, right? So it's an immensely fluid situation. Every hour there's a big development. But from an Iranian point of view, if we look at the

big picture, it's a stunning achievement. They got almost everything that they wanted, at least on paper or electronically signed. Now, we don't know what's going to happen next. But the 14 points that they were pressing for two to three weeks, now they got practically everything.

#Danny

Yeah. And we saw, Pepe, and this is, I think, going to be a big problem. I mean, Israel is feigning this absolute rage, right? You have Smotrich, you have Netanyahu. They're all saying that Lebanon is not part of this deal and that they do not take orders from the United States. I mean, it's a huge performance right now. But immediately after these strikes, Trump did something that he doesn't often do, which is say anything against what Israel does. But he said that those attacks that happened, which led to this mad dash to get to this deal, should not have happened, that these attacks should not have happened, and that he said all sides need to stand down.

But he said separately in a phone call that the IDF should not be involved in Lebanon at all. And now we are hearing that J.D. Vance is saying the opposite of this. There's a lot of games, it seems like, and now J.D. Vance is saying, well, Israeli troops in Lebanon are not part of the deal. This seems like a big mess, but I think what you just said there in terms of Iran really facilitating even getting to this point is really the story here — that it was Iran saying, well, we're pointing our missiles at Israel, we're going to launch them soon — seemed to have generated a lot of activity right after that. But your thoughts? Yeah.

#Pepe Escobar

Absolutely, and they stood firm all the way. They did not abdicate from the 14 points. Maybe they relented a little bit on one or two, but the most important thing — the sequence of events, the sequencing — was established by the Iranians. First, you end all wars. Then we start talking about the Strait of Hormuz. Okay, we are willing to have the Strait of Hormuz totally free of any tolls or administration fees or whatever, but for 30 days. And then after that, when we start phase two, which is to discuss the elements of a deal, we can impose everything that we want because we're already talking with the Omanis about that. And of course, number three is Lebanon, which was the most important thing related to number one. Lebanon is part of the whole MOU and the deal, if the deal will be signed in the future. Period.

And that's exactly where Israel comes in, because they are bombing one of the key elements of the MOU. Lebanon is a key element of the MOU, and the Iranians are fighting for Lebanon nonstop. So this is, I would say, the margin that the death cult has for the moment. They will continue to punish Lebanon, to attack Lebanon, harass Lebanon, bomb Lebanon, whatever. And the Iranians already said to the Americans, look, it's part of the deal. As long as you don't do anything about it, as long as you don't help Israel, okay, we will deal with Israel by ourselves, which is probably what's going to happen, I would say, in the next few days or weeks. If Israel doesn't stop, Iran will deal with them directly, which was exactly what they were about to do this weekend. And that's what's

changed in the equations. So Tel Aviv, they have every reason to be terrified. They are on their own, essentially.

#Danny

Help clarify the Strait of Hormuz situation then, when it comes to this memorandum of understanding, because on the one hand, you know, there's all this talk about, okay, the Strait of Hormuz is completely open for 30 days under Iranian arrangements, and then there are others who are saying that the U.S. side, well, no, it's just completely open, and they don't mention with no tolls. But there seems to be an agreement that Iran will be charging these service fees and that will be overlooked. But I'm curious what the actual situation is, and whether you believe Iran will continue to exercise leverage over the Strait of Hormuz should this agreement not be met up to standards by the United States — if the U.S. does not meet up to the agreements or the conditions in it?

#Pepe Escobar

Whatever happens, Danny, and whatever the American attitude is, the legal status of the Strait of Hormuz will be something completely different compared to before the war. They will organize a system to apply — they will probably euphemistically call them administrative tax fees or whatever, environmental fees, security for freedom of navigation, etc. — which they are already, once again, discussing with the Omanis. So this is inevitable. For the first 30 days, and that, of course, assuming the Americans are going to fulfill their end of the bargain, which is to end their Trump-era blockade, this trade will be completely free — there will be no tolls, no fees, etc. for one month. When they start the next phase, which is to discuss the actual possible deal, that's another story.

And this is part of the MOU. Let me see if I can find it here, where they talk directly about the Strait of Hormuz. Security—no, I cannot find it at the moment. But I remember very well that among the 14 points, the Strait of Hormuz will already be part of the provisional settlement, already in the 60 days following the first 30 days. Ah, yes, you got the whole thing. Okay, reopening of the Strait of Hormuz within 30 days. Exactly, this is the language. Under Iranian arrangements—translation: yes, they will have their administrative fees. Absolutely.

Absolutely. And of course, this was agreed between both parties. The Americans essentially agreed. They know that they cannot force Iran not to have control over the Strait of Hormuz. Period. This is their great strategic victory of the whole war. They will never abandon it. Never. Even under total fire, maximum pressure, whatever, all that crap. The thing is, will the U.S. be agreement-capable? I posed this question in the column, Danny. Will the U.S., for the first time in memory, be agreement-capable? None of us believe in that, of course. Right.

#Danny

No, no. And now the question is, Pepe, you know, I know that in your upcoming column you are calling this a huge multipolar breakthrough. You're talking about the role of Pakistan. It was actually the Pakistani prime minister who first announced that this deal was done on X. Now talk about this because, you know, there were a lot of moving pieces here, and, you know, Iran and the United States were certainly dealing with a multitude of mediators. We know the Gulf countries were very concerned about what would happen if hostilities were to restart. So talk about this as what you have termed a multipolar breakthrough. Sure.

#Pepe Escobar

Absolutely. And this is what Larry and I were particularly interested in from the beginning, that we would have access to what was being discussed at the table by the Pakistani mediators, unfiltered. So we were getting practically one briefing a day for the past few days. This is huge, enormous. And, of course, they were not only mediating between Washington and Tehran directly. It was the only state that was conducting the mediation at the highest level. They were getting help from a lot of players. The most important one, which is acknowledged in this statement by the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, is Qatar. They mentioned by name only two states: Pakistan, the main mediators, and Qatar, and they expressed their appreciation to both.

But in the background, we also had Turkey, especially Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. So everybody was involved. And they were also involved in helping the Pakistanis to explain to the UAE, essentially to explain to MBZ, look, you bet on the wrong horse. You better try to find an understanding with Iran, or you're going to be in deep, deep trouble. And apparently, MBZ got the message. And that explains the famous Emirati flight to Tehran with \$2 billion. So Pakistan was coordinating all that, which in itself is immensely impressive. A lot of people know that I have deep reservations concerning the Pakistani government. A lot of people know that I was a huge supporter of Imran Khan. But at the same time, we, as independent analysts, have to practice realpolitik.

And, of course, recognize when there is a state that is doing outstanding mediation work, which has been the case with Pakistan so far. And they were in a unique position because of their very close relations with Tehran. For instance, I think I mentioned this with you and in other podcasts as well. When there was a key visit to talk to Mojtaba Khamenei face-to-face in Iran, the Iranian Minister of Interior took a delegation of Pakistani Shiite scholars to meet with Mojtaba and to basically demonstrate their respect and express their gratitude, talk about the assassination of his dad, etc. The Iranians immensely appreciated that. This is cultural and religious respect. Very, very important.

So the Pakistanis, they did all the right moves to, okay, we need trust. We need you to trust us because we are talking directly to Trump. Asim Munir picks up the telephone, calls Trump, answers immediately. He doesn't do this with practically anybody apart from maybe Putin and Xi. That's it. So the Pakistanis played their hand very, very well. And of course, they had excellent relations with all

the Gulf patron monarchies. And backtracking even more, I'm sure many of you, our audience, will remember that the first meeting of Muslim nations, even before the first Islamabad meeting, when Vance went to Islamabad and Galibaf as well, there were four Sunni Muslim nations in this meeting.

Pakistan, the host, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt. So these were the four, let's say, the four early-stage Sunnis that started the whole, okay, let's try to find something. So they debated, debated, debated, not much happened. And the next day, the Pakistani foreign minister had to go to Beijing to meet Wang Yi and explain to Wang Yi, okay, what happened in Islamabad? He said, ah, not much. I said, well, you have to do better. But at the same time, the Chinese were imprinting their full support for the Pakistani mediation. And that's one of the key aspects of this whole kabuki. Once again, let's put it this way: very, very complicated. And of course, the Chinese are masters at disguising their influence.

So what did we have in practice in terms of trying to convince the Americans that this was the only off-ramp in town for Trump? It was this extremely discreet but very effective China-Iran-Pakistan alliance. And why China? Well, all of you know very, very well. New Silk Roads — which are the key partners of the New Silk Roads all across Eurasia? Iran. Which is the other one? Pakistan. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor from Xinjiang, from Kashgar, crossing Pakistan, going all the way to Gwadar in the Arabian Sea. So you put these two together, once again, China behind both, who suggested to the Pakistanis, look, you should open overland corridors with Iran to help them redirect their trade after this stupid American blockade.

So Pakistan opens six overland border crossings with Iran, and a lot of Iranian trade goes through Pakistan. And vice versa. Why? Because the shortest way between Iran and China is not through Central Asia, it's through their mutual neighbor, Pakistan. So all that is interconnected. The fascinating aspect is, if we're talking about the bigger picture of Eurasian integration, this is the perfect microcosm — the integration between West Asia and South Asia to China. And this was the geoeconomic trade mirror image of the geopolitical alliance between China, Pakistan, and Iran. So all that is totally interconnected.

I wonder if anybody in the Trump administration knew about these details. I wouldn't bet on it. I discussed this with Larry and with some other of our friends. They don't even know where these places are. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that they are all interconnected? So the Pakistanis managed to pull that off because they had this solid Chinese backing all the way. And, of course, once again, because they could talk directly to Trump and to the highest levels of the Trump administration. That's why it worked. And, of course, sending messages to Trump that they immediately got from the Iranians.

For instance, this weekend, the Pakistanis were telling Trump what Araghchi told them in Islamabad. Directly. In a matter of minutes. You know, this was on Trump's table. So that helped. And, of course, this, I would say, this amount of serious goodwill by all the Gulf petromonarchies, which were terrified that the war would never end. All of them, for different reasons. So they all told

Pakistan, look, we'll help you. Anything you want, we'll help you. Money, okay, we give you money, whatever. But please try to convince Trump not to restart the war. So we put this all together. That's why the Pakistanis, in the end, they delivered. So they have every reason to be proud, in fact.

#Danny

Yeah, well, did you hear about the Qatari? I mean, there was so much, I think, desperation on all sides outside of Iran. Basically, every side of this war, anyone who had been touched by this war in the region, other than Iran and, of course, Israel, which is the great destroyer, or as our friend says, the great Satan. But there was a secret deal leaked. Supposedly, Qatar was offering something really, really interesting, where it was saying that in the middle of this war, it would halt liquefied natural gas production so Iran wouldn't target Qatar — the gas, the huge gas complex that eventually did actually get targeted.

And so, it seems like Qatar was also a big player in the memorandum of understanding talks. They might have even—I think they were in Iran at the time when Iran was preparing to strike Israel yesterday, right before the memorandum of understanding was announced, agreed upon. So yeah, there seems to be a whole lot of interest for there to be a cessation of hostilities and eventually a complete end to the war. But will Israel allow this, Pepe? Because it seems like the United States, for as much as Donald Trump said Netanyahu has no effing judgment, all of this kind of bravado...

It seems like Israel just keeps going anyway. And I'm just curious if you believe that in the coming days, as Friday approaches—I've been saying this to people—I'm like, this is embarrassing. If Friday approaches and Israel is continuing to essentially burn key pieces of this MOU movement, what happens then? Because it's really embarrassing for the U.S. to look like a country that depends so heavily on it militarily. This death cult can continue on without any repercussions.

#Pepe Escobar

Well, there is an email circulating among several of us. I cannot say who the source is, but it's all people that we know, right? And none of us believe that Israel will respect the terms of the MOU. So the problem is, how is Iran going to react? They already said, OK, we'll deal with them directly. But will the U.S. really react or adopt a hands-off approach? If that happens—not when that happens—extra bombings of Dahyeh, for instance. The Israelis are already saying on the record that they will continue to bomb Dahyeh.

And they will continue to occupy the villages in southern Lebanon where they already are. And once again, that will be an extra humiliation for the empire of plunder and piracy, by the way, if the minions in West Asia continue not to respect an MOU signed by his master's voice. And that's where we are at the moment. So this proves once again that Trump is so desperate for his deal that he's even willing to face extra humiliation. But it's crazy, Nima, because we are dealing with— You confused me with Nima, sorry. I'm so sorry. You should see the state of my brain nowadays.

#Danny

No, totally.

#Pepe Escobar

I'm really, really sorry. We are dealing with a psychopathic, sociopathic entity with no limits, literally, and no limits to their demented vision of power and influence. And everybody is inferior to them—their lousy book, their lousy prophets, you name it. It's terrible. There's no way to teach these people a lesson unless you go for—I won't pronounce the magic words—something really, really radical. And everybody that knows, that has been there, that has talked to them, like our friend Alastair Crooke, for instance, they knew that it's impossible. It's even impossible to start a dialogue with these people.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And Pepe, you know, there were some Iranian analysts, like, I believe his name is Fadaazadi, who was saying... Fadaazadi, he's very good. Fadaazadi is very serious, yes. He was saying that part—one of the big concerns right now, and I'm curious how valid you feel these concerns are—is that you mentioned earlier that there were Iranians who are not happy with coming to an agreement with the United States at this stage, that there are many Iranians who are feeling that way. He said that even floating the idea that the Strait of Hormuz would be open at the request of the United States is going too far, and that the United States has not provided sufficient security guarantees up until this point.

What do you make of this, and do you find that the U.S. could—you said we were going to find out if the U.S. is agreement-incapable. Security guarantees for the empire of chaos—it's quite an ask, given the way it behaves around the world, and we've seen it with Iran in particular, but so many other cases. So what do you make of this? I feel like this is a very complex issue, and it has been since the very beginning, this idea of Iran even taking part in negotiations at this stage with the U.S. But what are your thoughts on this?

#Pepe Escobar

Which is the official position of Mostafa Khamenei. In fact, something very important happened within the past two weeks. Mostafa Khamenei basically told the Supreme National Security Council—if I'm not mistaken, there are 13 members of the Supreme National Security Council—11 of them are deeply, let's say, to put it diplomatically, averse to any sort of understanding with the non-agreement-capable empire of chaos. And there are two, let's put it this way, reformists, including the president, Pesachkin. But Mostafa Khamenei basically told the Supreme National Security Council,

"Okay, look, I delegate the decision to you, and it has to be by a sizable majority. If you think that the terms of the MOU are exactly what you have been asking, proposing, and discussing so far, okay with your decision."

This is what we got from the best-positioned people in Tehran. For instance, when we first broke, Larry and I, the story that Iran, if the Americans were crossing every threshold, might consider the possibility of a North Korea-style deterrence demonstration, which would be to detonate a nuclear device on Iranian soil to prove once and for all that, okay, we have all the deterrence that we need. We got this information based on what Pesachkin himself told Shabazz Sharif on a phone call. The Americans were pissed when this information was leaked because this influenced everything that happened afterward. And a copy of my column landed on the desk of one of the guys, part of the very tight inner circle of leader Mostafa Khamenei, via our friends at The Cradle in Beirut. And we got an answer after a few days.

And his answer—I'm quoting him directly from Farsi to English—was, "I won't comment on this matter." It's very important. He did not deny it. This was a non-response response, but it was no denial whatsoever. Of course, if he had denied it, he would be saying that the president of Iran is a liar, because this is exactly what Pesachkin told Shabazz Sharif. And then Sharif instructed everybody, "Look, Trump has to know about this. This is an extra element." And they told us—they told us in the first place—we, the Pakistani mediators. So this proves several things: the degree of trust between the Iranians and the Pakistanis, the amount of sensitive information that they were passing to the Pakistanis, and the fact that they knew that this information would be instantly relayed to the Americans, and all the consequences in between and afterwards.

So all that once again illustrates—and obviously behind that, the Chinese agreeing with everything—so it's an extra illustration of how deep and complex this interaction was. But can we assume that the Americans were understanding the breadth, the scope, and the depth of this interaction, and how they had virtually no margin of maneuver except start dreaming of a land invasion, grab the island of Karg, and other crap like that? No, I'm not so sure they understood the game. I think they only understood the game yesterday, Danny, when the Iranians said via the Pakistanis once again, "Okay, we're going to bomb Israel to death." Then they understood.

#Danny

Yeah, I mean, in those events that transpired, we know that Iran can fire very quickly, can respond very quickly. We saw the delay and the various mixed messages. We saw the United States get out in front. It wasn't Iran getting out in front. Then Israeli media tried to say that, no, no, no, Iran is not going to be negotiated away from attacking us. And then we saw ultimately what happened, which is the agreement was finalized, or at least the MOU was finalized. That is supposed to, Pepe, include Lebanon on all fronts.

Now, there have been some people who are very concerned, of course, about not just Lebanon, but also Gaza and the rest of the fronts in which Israel is engaged. The MOU does say "in all fronts." I'm guessing that would include Iraq and perhaps even Gaza. But what do you make of this? Because it's definitely a point that I see heavily debated now on social media. There are some who are angry with Iran for coming to this MOU without specifying more clearly that there needs to be a cessation everywhere and one that's enforced. But I'm curious about your thoughts on this.

#Pepe Escobar

This is, uh, I would say, one of the key points of public opinion in Iran blaming Araqchi and branding Araqchi as a traitor. Araqchi would never, never go against what was decided by Mostafa Khamenei and the Supreme Council. Never. He doesn't have that kind of leeway. His leeway is, yes, you have the leeway to debate and to discuss as our number one. And in fact, he was not even the number one negotiator. The number one negotiator was Ghalibaf. But we had a rearrangement these past few weeks where Ghalibaf decided to be in the background. And he has a new post, as we commented before as well. He's in charge of, not by accident, strategic relations with China.

So you see how important Ghalibaf is, because the most important relationship for Iran is China. So you need your top guy to be in charge of that. And Ghalibaf is not a diplomat by profession. Araqchi is. So the Iranians have these roles very well coordinated. So we get our top diplomat to discuss a diplomatic solution, and we have our top parliamentarian and former IRGC commander, by the way, Ghalibaf, in charge of our most important strategic relationship with China. Everything makes perfect sense. But everything with the Persians is logical. It's the absolute opposite of the West. You know, there's nothing irrational about it. On the contrary.

But I was very struck by the degree of vitriol, and people were really, really pissed at Araqchi because they still didn't know the exact terms of the 14 points and what was agreed by the Americans. That's why Araqchi kept saying, even before this weekend—I think the last time he got into detail about that was from Friday to Saturday—he said, look, next week you're going to have all the detailed points that will be part of the MOU. And now that we have extra leaks on Iranian media of the actual terms of the MOU, Iran didn't concede practically anything. So we will still need formal confirmation between today and tomorrow, Max, of the full terms.

It's a short document. Apparently, it's less than two pages, the whole thing. It's just literally a memorandum of understanding. It's not a treaty. It's not a deal. No, it's a memorandum of understanding. Okay, we're going to start discussing following these points. And then it can go sideways, you know, you name it. But at least you have the main points. Hezbollah itself. But it's interesting, Danny, the degree of debate in Iranian public society is quite something. You don't have this kind of debating. In very, very few Western democracies do you have this kind of public debate over such a sensitive issue.

#Danny

Hezbollah itself has come out and congratulated Iran and has thanked Iran for, you know, including and, of course, fighting on the side of the resistance. And this answers the question from someone—a longtime viewer, actually—why didn't Iran retaliate against the Israeli bombing of Beirut last night?

#Pepe Escobar

I can see this question, which is a very good question. Because Trump, at the last minute, he backed off. They were ready. They were literally the famous fingers on the trigger that we keep hearing from some IRGC commanders. They were on the trigger yesterday. And as crazy as it seems, it was this instance that actually saved the MOU. Because the Iranians made the point to Trump, look, we are ready to bomb Israel now. That's it. And Trump, at the last minute, said, okay, okay, okay, I'll sign it. That's what happened yesterday. By the way, his birthday, right?

#Danny

Yeah, that was another thing that I think maybe rubbed some people the wrong way, that it was his birthday and there were rumblings that he really wanted to get it done for his birthday. It was a big birthday gift to him. It was going to be his way of celebrating. Yeah, all of this.

#Pepe Escobar

But his birthday gift was offered by Team Ghalibaf Araqchi. That's the juiciest part of it all.

#Danny

Yeah, well, it's certainly quite something, and I hope people can acknowledge this — that this 14-point plan, none of those points, you could say, have ever been produced by the United States. They're not ones that the U.S. came to the table with at any point since April and said, this is what we want. Actually, all we've seen from the Trump administration is them reinterpreting either the points or completely making up things altogether. But the points altogether are basically Iran's points. And I guess that's where people are going to have to decide whether it's good enough or not. I think the big question is, how does such a thing get implemented under Donald Trump as president, with his entire administration's longstanding goal of ensuring Iran doesn't get stronger? I mean, that's failed because of war. But this must be a tough pill to swallow. It's going to be a very interesting next several weeks and into this actual negotiations period, if we get to it.

#Pepe Escobar

It's true, Danny, because anybody in the U.S. with their critical faculties still relatively intact can see that this is a massive strategic defeat any way you look at it. How to swallow this pill? Of course,

inside the U.S., the backlash is going to be gigantic. And they're going to go after Trump, after the Trump administration, you name it. It's going to be very, very, very tough. And, of course, when people start realizing the geopolitical consequences of what is unfolding in front of us, there are so many. The most obvious is that it's the end of American supremacy in West Asia, period. It's not coming back. And it involves everything from never rebuilding those destroyed bases to basically a retreat. And there's going to be a new protection umbrella in West Asia.

And probably the main actor is going to be Pakistan, a nuclear power supported by China. Maybe there's going to be some Russian participation later on. For the moment, the Russians are being very, very quiet because, of course, they have their war to deal with. And now the whole thing regarding the SMO is changing in front of us because of public pressure. Russians are fed up with the drone war, the terrorist drone war. So Putin and the Kremlin and the Minister of Defense, they will have to adjust their tactics. But the Russians were behind all the time, just looking and saying, oh, we got a fabulous opening in West Asia. So can you imagine having to deal with all that, especially in the Beltway and with the military-industrial complex?

#Danny

It's a major trauma. And they inflicted it on themselves. That's the craziest thing ever.

#Pepe Escobar

We're not talking about Brzezinski's—you remember that, blah, blah, Brzezinski, blah, blah, blah. We need to be ready against a peer competitor. No, this is the real shit. And it didn't come from the peer competitors. It came from a middle power under 47 years of sanctions, able to inflict a strategic defeat on the greatest armada in the history of the world. How can you sell this inside the U.S.? It's impossible.

#Danny

Absolutely impossible. No, I mean, it might be a huge gift, speaking of birthdays, to Donald Trump—to get that armada out and try to erase, you know, like Men in Black, you know, just press that button, everyone's memory of what just happened is gone. Because honestly, yeah, it truly is a staggering failure on the part of the U.S. Some would argue that, no, it's not, because the U.S. wants to control the oil markets. But this doesn't feel like control of any oil markets right now. Essentially, what the United States is trying to agree to, at least in rhetoric, is they would like the Strait of Hormuz, which was open before the war, to reopen.

And they're OK with Iranian control, regulation of the Strait of Hormuz, as long as they call it service fees or environmental protection fees. As long as it's not called a toll, fine. But it seems like that, and then to normalize to the rest of the world—okay, this is just how it is. I think that's a much easier thing than to get the Empire of Chaos to agree. But that seems to be where things are at. That's a

massive geopolitical, economic, global, geoeconomic shift that is feeling more and more permanent the more we go down this road of talks between the two, U.S., Iran, etc.

#Pepe Escobar

And it is permanent, Danny, because now the big, big power in West Asia is Iran now, and one of the big independent powers in the world as well, on a second tier compared to the U.S., Russia, and China, of course, but a big, big and rising regional power and respected all over the world, especially respected among the Global South. Full member of BRICS, full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, with a partnership with the Eurasian Economic Union. Iran is at the center of the whole process of Eurasian integration. Strategic relationships with both Russia and China. Very, very few nations are at this level. Very few. So it's no wonder this discussion already started that Iran is the fourth big power.

Not at the same level, but yes, it's getting there. It's getting there, absolutely. And in Eurasia, no question, Iran is now, and the way it's perceived all across the Global South, wow. Iran is perceived as a Global South example of resilience, strategic sovereignty, independence, and especially, once again, something that is very close to Putin and Xi—exercising their sovereignty and resisting everything that the empire threw against them. Wow. This is how important geopolitical shifts in history work. It's usually after a war. And we are right in the middle of it. And there is really a winner in this war. Maybe not so clear-cut, but the strategic winner of this war is, without a shadow of a doubt, Iran.

#Danny

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, to expect Iran not to have taken any losses confronting two nuclear powers—I mean, we don't have to call Israel a power per se, but given that Israel does have so much influence in the United States and its own body politic, you would call Israel a nuclear power, because it has nuclear weapons. So Israel and the U.S.—yeah, you take losses, but to be able to come out in a better position, yeah, I would say that is the definition of victory in a war, especially a war of this nature, which is still not symmetrical. It's not like it was. We're past the days of World War I, World War II, empires fighting each other. No, there's just one empire now. There's just one, really. So it's a huge reality.

Pepe, in the last five minutes or so that we have here, maybe you can help us understand what kind of reverberations this phase of the war now will have on the rest of the world, maybe even some of the other fronts. You just said that Russians are sick of the drone terror of Ukrainians. That war seems to be in that phase. The battlefield feels almost—I won't say static, because I think Russia's doing quite well on the battlefield for the kind of war they're fighting—but it does appear that the U. S. is trying to pivot back to a more, maybe preferable, kind of warfare, which is by proxy. By proxy, hybrid. Yeah, hybrid, exactly. That's the word I was looking for. So, your thoughts?

#Pepe Escobar

Yes, and many of us are worried that they will refocus once again on another adventure in Latin America. And the number one candidate is Cuba. So, once again, Western Hemisphere—it's in the national security doctrine, our backyard, Monroe Doctrine 2.0, that's it. And obviously, they have to forget the humiliation in West Asia. So the first candidates will be in Latin America, unfortunately. Not to mention destabilization and influence—they're going to influence heavily in the elections in Brazil later this year. They're going to put a lot of effort into getting the Bolsonaro family back in power. So this is what's going to happen, unfortunately. And in terms of Eurasia, what is absolutely fascinating is something that many of us have been working on for decades, in fact.

They are being progressively—I would not say slowly, but certainly, surely—being expelled from Eurasia. That's it. Eurasian integration is right in front of us in detail. And another thing that we should be paying a lot of attention to: only three months from now, the BRICS Summit in India. Will the BRICS understand what is taking place in front of all of them and all of us? And it's the worst possible place to have a summit this year. But that's it. You have to deal with it. So we're gonna have to rely once again on Lavrov and Wang Yi driving this gigantic ship, the BRICS ship. So, okay. Well, we're getting stronger by the day. Look what happened to one of our full members. Basically, they won against the Empire. Instead of in one of our endless meetings, lots of suits. No, no.

#Danny

On the battlefield, they went there and they got it.

#Pepe Escobar

So the lessons in Delhi, in three months from now, this is going to be quite something. But it gives us a little bit of hope, right, Danny? Yeah.

#Danny

Oh, yeah. Oh, no, I definitely, I think, you know, some could interpret these emerging problems within BRICS. For example, having, of course, the great—in Delhi, in India—the great, maybe I would call it betrayal, but maybe the reveal of the, you know, the Indian political elite constantly hedging bets and hedging, unfortunately, maybe far too hard on the U.S.-Israeli side. But then you have the UAE, of course. If Saudi is still on the fence, the UAE is a full member, and the UAE was just a big party to this war. But you can see these divisions that are emerging. We could see them as big problems, but also perhaps sometimes reality can actually help build something better if those conflicts end up coming to some kind of resolution—maybe not at a BRICS summit, but outside of it.

I mean, Iran is going to be coming into a BRICS summit like this coming one far stronger than before. And that is, I think, a plus for any kind of multipolar development project, including BRICS.

So we'll have to see how it goes. But I think it's just very interesting that we are able to even talk about things like this. It wasn't too long ago when the U.S. waged war, we would simply be talking about the massive casualties, the instability, and all of that which it sows. Now we're talking about, I think, a far more level kind of field. And that's different. That's a different conversation. Any closing thoughts before I hit end stream here, Pepe?

#Pepe Escobar

Reminds me of something to illustrate what you just said, giving us a little bit of extra hope. The UAE, as we all know, for all practical purposes, they were at war against Iran. And now the Iranians have evidence that the UAE was part of the U.S.-Israeli war from the beginning. Well, so a few weeks ago, I was talking to one of our connections to the Pakistani mediators. I said, can you ask them what they are doing with the UAE? Do they have a plan for the UAE? And the guys at the table said, look, we are bringing the UAE to reason. It's going to take a while. Maybe it's going to be a matter of two or three months. And it's already happening.

The Pakistanis explained to the UAE, look, your position should be similar to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Turkey. You are on the wrong side of history. You still have time. With a few gestures, maybe the Iranians will decide to talk to you again. For the moment, they are on the point of razing Abu Dhabi and Dubai to the ground. It's up to you. So it's amazing. In fact, it took a few weeks, and nobody would have bet on it that the UAE would finally try, okay, let's try to find some understanding. Because now they see who is the most powerful conglomerate in West Asia. It's not the Americans anymore. So they're going to have to deal with Iran. They're neighbors on top of it.

They confiscated a lot of Iranian money, which they're going to have to give back. Dubai was always an extension of Iran in terms of business. So this gives us—so once again, this is an internal BRICS matter as well. Obviously, the Chinese and the Russians hate the fact that two BRICS members are at war against each other. Yeah. So, obviously, they helped the Pakistanis to instill some sense into MBZ. A few weeks ago, if you talked about that, you were a lunatic. No, it's actually happened. So maybe something like this can be organized by Russia and China vis-à-vis India, Danny. We should hope, because it's for the good of BRICS, in fact. They need to explain the facts of life to the Indian elites. They still don't get it.

#Danny

Yeah, well, Pepe, it was great having you on the program. We will head out together. I'm going to make sure now that your Telegram and your X accounts are in the video description, so people should check those out because your column should be coming out soon. Not only on this matter, and you also post so many other things.

#Pepe Escobar

Check out our new channel, Larry and I. Yes, Transition Protocol. We are starting from scratch. And, of course, we're going to need the help of all of you. All our friends know about it as well. And we have something that very few people have. We have information straight from the negotiating table. And this means other negotiating tables, because we confront what we get with the Iranians and also, of course, as much as we can with the Chinese. We all know how extremely sophisticated and discreet they are, but with nuggets here and there, we can always get an answer.

#Danny

Yeah, well, that is now also in the video description below. So do subscribe. I'm a subscriber, so you all should subscribe too. Okay, so other than that, hit the like button because that will get more people watching. And then, of course, there are all the places to support this show in the video description below after you check out Pepe's work. Until next time, everyone, I'll see you tomorrow. I will announce what's going on then. Take care. Bye-bye.

#Pepe Escobar

Cheers. Thank you.