

Pepe Escobar: US Expands War: Jordan, Kuwait & Bahrain Next?

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#Nima

Pepe, I really believe that Iran has total escalation dominance.

#Pepe

Yes, I completely agree. I completely agree. The title of my article that was published, I think, a few hours ago in Russia is "Escalation Blues." The Escalation Blues is for all of us. We are singing the blues of escalation, and we thought that this was—no, now it's inevitable. But the difference is that the escalation ladder itself is controlled by Iran, not controlled by the Americans. And Iran has not even started to really escalate the responses. And so the Americans have not seen how far Iran can go. Ah, yeah? So you're planning to destroy our civilian infrastructure again? Just wait.

#Nima

Because if they go after civilian infrastructure, you know that they hit two water tanks. They did—two water tanks on Sirik Island, which is the water supply to Sirik Island.

#Pepe

50,000 people without water. You're right, yes.

#Nima

But Iran didn't escalate that. Iran didn't respond the same way. They keep focusing on the American bases, the strategic points in those countries as they attack Iran. They mentioned, the IRGC mentioned, that 12 ballistic missiles were used to attack this major air base in Jordan, as you've mentioned.

#Pepe

And apparently a lot of F-15s, F-16s, F-35s, they turned to dust. Yeah, it's quite possible. Absolutely.

#Nima

And just imagine, the easiest target for Iran is going to be Ben Gurion Airport.

#Pepe

Of course. And this is something that Iran can do with their hypersonic missiles. They can totally obliterate Ben Gurion Airport if they want. Absolutely. Absolutely. And that train station—there's only one big train station connecting railways in Israel—they can destroy that train station. Same thing. I think they are saving it for the right moment, because they know that if the escalation continues, this is just the beginning. And that will be the kiss of death for the Israel-U.S. alliance. They are saving it for the right moment. Absolutely. Absolutely. But coming back to the possibility of any sort of diplomatic understanding between the U.S. and Iran, now it has vanished. Unfortunately, it's back to less than zero after all these efforts.

#Nima

I think here is what the head of the Iranian parliament and chief negotiator, Qalibaf, said. He tweeted that wrong strategies and impulsive actions will reset the entire board for the worse, explode energy infrastructure and markets, and create an endless quagmire that you will be stuck in forever. For years. And you'll see a different Iran. I think we are witnessing, at this particular moment, a different Iran. That's why they're attacking Israel without being attacked by Israel. Because of Lebanon. That's the whole game. The whole game has changed.

#Pepe

You're right. This is the major game changer. And this is the proof that this is an axis of resistance process. It's not only Iran. And the fact that this interconnection, the maritime interconnection uniting Bab al-Mandeb to the Persian Gulf, is exactly the same thing again. This is a unified axis of resistance fighting U.S.-Israel from now on. There's no division. Okay, inside there may be some division of labor—okay, who's going to attack what and how, etc. The overall concept of unified resistance, now it's in practice. It has been put into practice. And once again, maybe they accelerated this process because of the warmongering of U.S.-Israel. Obviously, they know that it's inevitable.

But all that, once again, it's the road that is leading all of us on the most dangerous road possible. And especially when you have an unhinged president of the United States contemplating all sorts of absurdities, including hints of a nuclear attack. Well, he already tried. Remember when he tried to get the nuclear codes in that famous meeting with CENTCOM? So it's, wow. It could not be worse than what it is now. And how fast it changed. Well, anyway, coming back to what we were trying to

do, Nima, Larry, and I, we still believe that we have to try to support diplomacy and mediation efforts. So our idea with this channel, which was, by the way, personally canceled by the U.S. government—I cannot get into names.

We have the names. We know who did it. We know who ordered Google to cut off this channel. Obviously, we cannot say it, but we know how it works. And our interlocutors know everything, how it works. So we set up a new channel. So I call all of you who follow Nima and myself, please go to Transition Protocol. It's a new channel on YouTube. It's very small. This week, we already did three shows. Larry did the first one on Monday. I did the second one on Tuesday. And yesterday, on Wednesday, Larry and I were on the same show. And there are a lot of nuggets. If you see it, it's not too long. It's 40 to 50 minutes, the show yesterday. You're going to see nuggets here and there. And this is hardcore intel straight from the source.

Very, very few people have it. And that's why we are involved in this project. There you go. Here's Transition Protocol. And what Nima is showing now is the three shows that we did this week—Monday, Tuesday, and yesterday, Wednesday. So we're going to have to start from scratch. It's very, very hard. The first breaking news that we had, we got some Nima-style audience. We got 125,000, 130,000. So now we have to start from scratch and build it all over again. But that's it. This is something that is very rare to find. For instance, the Americans have Israeli IDF soldiers posing as journalists. We don't do that kind of shit. We are real journalists delivering real intel from real negotiators.

And he comes from Pakistan, but is Pakistan talking to Iran? And then we have the background of Pakistan talking to Saudi Arabia. Then we have input from Turkey. Then we have stuff that we can confirm with our sources. Larry can confirm in the U.S., I can confirm with Russia and China, plus stuff that we can ask our Iranian friends and connections. So this is what it is. This small channel is about real intel with all the players. And, of course, the main focus is, let's try to solve this forever war before it gets totally out of control. And that's the problem, Nima. This week that we are in, we are heading towards totally out of control. Nobody wants that, except, of course, the usual suspects, right?

#Nima

You know, what's so fragile about the argument on the part of the United States about that Apache helicopter is that they said that Apache helicopter was hit by a drone. Then the two pilots are alive and they were not injured during this attack. But before that, to understand what was the main reason for the United States to attack Iran, I think we have to understand what happened before that attack on the Apache helicopter. That was the Iranian attack on Israel because Israel attacked Lebanon. Iran responded to Israel in the northern part of Israel, then the Israeli attack on Iran, then the Iranian response.

The Iranian response, it seems, was so hard. And they said, the Israelis said that they intercepted each and every missile that Iran fired at Israel. Later on, we had some footage showing that Iran hit Ramat David Air Base in Israel. Yes. And here is the new satellite image, a high-quality satellite image. It shows how Iran hit that building. The left one is before the attack, and the right one is after the attack. You see, they basically destroyed the building in that area. Absolutely. And I think the reason the United States decided to go with the attack is that Israel was not capable of attacking Iran and doing what they had in mind in terms of having some sort of equal response.

#Pepe

Not only do they not have what they can do, but their interceptors and their defense capabilities are extremely reduced. Exactly. So Iran can bomb Israel practically with impunity from now on. If they decide to, you know, reach the escalation ladder in terms of bombing Israel, it's not a problem for Iran now. And obviously, the Americans freaked out completely with that. No question. No question.

#Nima

That has changed. I don't know what Donald Trump can do for Israel because they were in the region. They had everything in the region when Iran attacked Israel. And as was mentioned by the Israeli media, the United States was trying to intercept those missiles, and they couldn't intercept them. This is the reality. Their defensive capabilities have been reduced drastically. This is the problem the United States is facing right now. I don't know if these offensives are going to help the Trump administration or the Israeli position. That's not going to happen.

#Pepe

No, of course not. And because of the response by Iran, we just saw the beginning of the response of Iran. When we have, I would say, a coordinated response by Iran, including Israel, not only Jordan now as a legitimate target, re-attacks on all those bases, attacking the Fifth Fleet, what remains of the Fifth Fleet, the Fifth Fleet again, but also Israel altogether. Wow. But will that be enough to instill some sense into the four-year-old brain of the emperor of barbaria? We know it won't, Nima, unfortunately. For instance, I discuss with Larry a lot. Larry thinks there is less than zero possibility of a diplomatic agreement. I think there is zero.

#Nima

It's totally right.

#Pepe

If we ask our friend Alastair Crooke, Alastair has been basically writing and analyzing that a diplomatic agreement is practically impossible. So what's left after all these efforts by the Pakistanis? Of course, we receive news from the Pakistani mediators now every day. They are still... okay, to be realistic, they are relatively optimistic because they are always saying, the last we heard, for instance, last night, "Look, the deal is not dead. It's very dangerous. We are at a crucial juncture, but we are not abandoning the table. And we are telling the Americans all the time, look, ourselves, our connections with Tehran, everybody behind it — Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar — everybody wants at least a memorandum of understanding."

So you cannot go against everyone. And at the moment, you are going against everybody — not to mention your own interests. But try to explain that to... okay, you can explain that to maybe American negotiators. But how do you explain that to Trump, Nima? We know it's impossible. Nobody can do that. The only one who could, if he picked up the phone again, would be Putin — which is what he tried to do a few weeks ago when they had their phone call. Putin tried to explain to Trump, look, take something, a memorandum of understanding, it's your only way to get an off-ramp. Nobody is going to give you another off-ramp. That's it. There's nothing else. Do you need help? I can help you. So obviously, he didn't listen.

#Nima

And today Russia said again, Vladimir Putin said the only solution would be negotiation and talking to each other.

#Pepe

Of course. It was one of the themes in St. Petersburg last week. And, of course, the Russians have no illusions about the backup of the Americans to this escalation ladder by the Europeans against Russia as well. They know who they're dealing with. But in terms of Iran, once again, Putin reaffirmed their strategic partnership. One of the things that he said was immensely intriguing. He said, look, the Iranians did not ask anything from us, which is true. You know the Persians, right, Nima? They are very, very proud. No, we can do everything by ourselves. And they can. But if they asked the Russians for some pretty hardcore military gear, Russia would have given it to them without even blinking. What Putin did not say, and this is as important as what he did say, is that Russia provided a lot of first-class intel to Iran. And this, in many cases, is much more important than weapons. Much more important.

#Nima

But we've seen a significant improvement in Iran's air defense system.

#Pepe

Oh, yes. And this is Russian and Chinese very, very discreet help in the background. Of course, of course.

#Nima

I don't know, Pepe, when it comes to the big picture, when it comes to Russia, because when he, Vladimir Putin, is suggesting the only solution would be negotiations, they have the same case with the United States. There is nobody there to negotiate with.

#Pepe

No, no, absolutely. The only thing, in terms of the Russians, they know that the only thing that may come out of what's going on nowadays is maybe a few trade deals or commercial opportunities. Because this is both oligarchies talking to each other — the American oligarchy and the Russian oligarchy. And obviously, the Kremlin looks at it like, okay, if they want to do business, no problem, as long as it does not interfere with our national security projects, for instance. An example: let's say one of the oil majors in the U.S. wants to go back to exploiting energy in the Arctic. This is going to be very circumscribed, very specific. And the Russian government, of course, will say, okay, you can do this, you can do this, but you cannot do that.

It's fine. That's it. But very, very circumscribed. There were American businessmen in St. Petersburg. Not an enormous delegation, but there were American businessmen exploring business opportunities. But in terms of a government-to-government breakthrough and diplomacy advancing, they have no illusions whatsoever. And obviously, the Russians are paying now much more attention to the European dimension, their escalation ladder against Russia using Ukraine. So this is their number one problem to deal with now. But at the same time, they are paying attention to Iran a lot. And of course, if Iran needs anything from Russia, they will get it. But so far, they have not asked.

#Nima

Pepe, do you think that the United States is still thinking of invading some of these islands? Because Donald Trump today said that Hark Island, we want to invade. Part of the operation tonight, he said that we want to invade. If you're going to invade an island, you don't talk about it.

#Pepe

Try to explain that to somebody who still doesn't understand Sun Tzu, Nima. Yes, we're going to invade your island tonight, tomorrow. How fucking stupid can that be? Okay. But that's who we are dealing with. These people are not very bright. They are dangerous, but they're not very bright. And the guy who's running the Pentagon, he's not even bright. He is an absolute idiot. So what to

expect, right? But it's dangerous. Kellogg, this absolute idiot you played the clip of at the beginning of our conversation, he was so stupid that he's marginalized by everybody. The Russians said, we will not allow this idiot to sit at any table discussing anything with us.

#Pepe

But it's tough, Nima. It's tough because if you look at the big picture around, if you look at how these wars are intersecting, if you look at the level of desperation of the people who run the show in the US and who run Trump and the European elites, their intersected level of desperation is mounting day by day. It gets extremely worrying because we are on the razor's edge of slipping into something very, very nasty — in Ukraine and against Iran, and perhaps even simultaneously. It's very, very worrying. Very, very worrying. And once again, every time that we think there are off-ramps and diplomacy has been given a chance, the thing collapses abruptly, which is what happened these past few days.

#Nima

The other problem, Pepe, is between Israel and Lebanon. It seems that the invasion of Lebanon is becoming a great pain in the neck for Israel.

#Pepe

They're having their asses kicked by Hezbollah. Period. Again. Why? Because they didn't do their homework, Nima. They may have Mossad cells in Beirut, which they do everywhere. They know where the leadership of Hezbollah goes. They can plant exploding smartphones or whatever, but they don't understand the Hezbollah way of war and how Hezbollah, in their own terrain in Lebanon and in southern Lebanon, are unbeatable. Period. They still don't know that. They haven't learned their lesson. So they're having their asses kicked.

Even with Hezbollah still under reconstruction, like we saw ourselves last year, when I was talking to Hezbollah politicians — very well-educated people — they said, look, it's a long... The second and the third level of leadership, we are still, you know, there's still a few things that they need to learn. But they are learning very, very fast, and they are well prepared. So when we are back, we're going to be back in full force. This was one year ago, Nima. Now we are watching that they are back in full force and with this new leadership commanding the resistance. It's something impossible for the Israelis to understand. It starts with the way they treat Arabs as a whole, as inferior. Start with that. It's that mix of arrogance and ignorance, typical of self-described hegemonic powers.

#Nima

So they will never learn their lesson. There you go. The Israeli solution for Lebanon is that they're not going to be able to defeat Hezbollah in the southern part of Lebanon. Then what else can they do? They wanted to attack Beirut, to level the whole of southern Beirut.

#Pepe

For what? Is this going to change anything? No, it won't.

#Nima

This is the moment that Iran entered the game. They said, you cannot attack. We're going to do the same to the northern part of Israel.

#Pepe

Absolutely, because Iran saw perfectly clearly that the plan is to turn Dahyeh into a new Gaza. No, that's it. This is beyond a red line. And this is very, very important.

#Nima

They really wanted to do this.

#Pepe

And this is a Shiite population, Nima. So, you know, it's like you are trying to do this with Iran. It's the same thing. It's exactly the same thing, Zach.

#Nima

And then yesterday we saw two videos from the Israeli president and the Israeli prime minister talking with the people in Lebanon and with the government, with the president of Lebanon. And the president of Israel said that he had watched your video on CNN, because Joseph Aoun had an interview with Christiane Amanpour. He was basically talking about how Iran is using Hezbollah, or using Lebanon, as a bargaining chip in the ongoing negotiations.

#Pepe

Only stupid Americans can believe that. But what do you expect? CNN—what do you expect?

#Nima

But the main focus of the Israelis is something else. The prime minister is telling the Lebanese people that Iran is, you know, that we are a friend of the Lebanese people. We are a friend of the Lebanese government. The only problem is Hezbollah. We are at war with Hezbollah. This is the message from Benjamin Netanyahu.

#Pepe

Two or three people in Beirut believe that. People who go to those flashy Hariri-style malls in Beirut near the Corniche and dream of being in Paris or in Rome, they may believe that. But that's a minority of the population. The absolute majority of the population in Beirut, they know that this is beyond bullshit. And the working class, this is fantastic. For instance, last year when I was there, I was always talking to the working class in Beirut whenever I could. And it's unanimous: Hezbollah is defending us. Sometimes they cannot say this openly because their employer is a westernized idiot, brainwashed by Americans and Israelis. But this is the real nitty-gritty. And Beirut is an absolutely outstanding city. The real nitty-gritty of the working class of Beirut, that's the real story.

#Nima

Yeah, I think the whole concept of the war in West Asia is so complicated. As time goes by, just imagine, it was all about the Iranian nuclear program, but nothing about the nuclear program has been discussed so far.

#Pepe

Exactly. And the Iranian nuclear program is a detail. And the order of discussions established by Iran proves that. Okay, the last stage of discussing our problems in war, in diplomacy, et cetera, is the nuclear dossier. There are many more important problems to discuss before that. It's a perfect example of how this is a detail. And it was never a big deal. The Americans made it a big deal. Iran, like anybody else, has the right to have a civilian nuclear program, like any nation on earth. The Americans made this a big deal. No, they are building a nuclear weapon. Everybody knew since the original Khomeini fatwa to the second Khamenei fatwa: no, we are not building a nuclear weapon because it's un-Islamic.

We are investing in our civilian nuclear program, which is something that non-biased inspectors, real inspectors and not bloody Mossad spies, going to Iran, it was their conclusion all the time. The Americans made it an issue. So when the Americans fabricate an issue, that becomes the problem, because if you control the narratives, if you control the system of dissemination of information, if you control the narratives, and if you control the language, because everything is in English, you set the agenda. And that's the great challenge to all of us across the Global South. We have to unmask these agendas in their own language and using their own system of disseminating news.

And, of course, ridicule them, which is much more interesting. We can unmask them, but the real pleasure is to ridicule them and show to the Global South as a whole how absolutely stupid and mediocre they are. And dangerous, always, of course. But, you know, strip them naked in the middle of the public square. They are naked in the middle of the public square, and the public square is the whole planet. By the way, this is being achieved right before the start of the World Cup, Nima. Most of the Global South is seeing the US under the emperor of barbaria for what it is, a racist shithole. I'm not talking about the US as a whole. The United States has absolutely outstanding people, configurations, parts of the culture.

I lived in the US. I loved the US since I was a kid. I understand the country very well. I know the US better than the country where I was born. But I'm talking about positions of power and systems of power, and the particular configuration of this administration, which is one of the most despicable things in the history of modern politics. These are the people who are running the United States, and they are trying to turn the United States into a racist shithole. Best demonstration these past few days: the way they are treating politicians, essentially Global South visitors coming to see the most important sports event on the planet. Senegal, Uzbekistan, the Somali referee. Shameful. Beyond shameful.

Beyond shameful. Come on. So that's it. The way what's happening now, it's a perfect mirror of the emperor of barbaria and the people around him. This is not the United States. The real United States is not like that. You know, the wonderful people that you meet when you go to the Midwest, to the Deep South, to the Florida Keys, to California, to New Mexico, to Arizona — they are not like that. But they are hostages of these people, these grifters, gangsters, perverted people, profiteers. Extremely dangerous, all of them. Starting with the new Epstein, Kushner. This is the ghastliest of them all. That's it. They are destroying the image of the United States, and they are destroying the soft power of the United States.