

Pepe Escobar: The Clock Is Ticking on Trump: Inside Iran's Calculated Moves

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#Nima

When it comes to the situation between Iran and the United States, what is, in your opinion, the main factor in what has happened? Because Donald Trump, we know that Donald Trump wants desperately to get out of the situation that he's in right now. He started them—yeah, exactly—he started himself the war of aggression against Iran. But there are two sort of problems. One of them is he's deeply involved with Israel, and he has to support Israel. There is no way out for him. On the other hand, he has to get out of the region. The two things don't come together.

And what is your understanding of the latest meeting we had between the two Americans and Iran in Switzerland, which, by the way, was a huge sort of—you know, you remember the same day they were there and Donald Trump was tweeting, "I'm going to kill you, then I'm going to attack Iran harder than before." You know, the Iranian team trying to walk out. And then you see what happened later on when J.D. Vance said, "Oh, we managed everything in nine hours, we were talking together." But how do you find the position, the situation that the United States is in, and Donald Trump particularly?

#Guest

Well, I wrote another column, Nima, about all that. And I wrote the column as a thriller. In Switzerland, because it was a thriller in Switzerland. It was cliffhangers, back and forth. And the whole thing practically collapsed in the middle of the... The negotiations did not even start, and they were already collapsing. So all of you, you can find this article on Geopolitics Prime. If you go on X and you go to Geopolitics Prime, and if you go to their Telegram channel as well, you will find this article in detail. And it's exclusive as well because our information came to Larry and to myself. It came from one of the guys who was at the negotiating table. So he told us stuff that was absolutely mind-boggling.

#Nima

This is the article that you're talking about.

#Guest

This is the article. This is the Telegram version, which anybody can read anywhere. So it is really inside the U.S. negotiations, and it is really a thriller. So among other things, guys, all of you, Iran actually walked out three times from the negotiation. It was not once. It was three times. Every time Trump opened his mouth to threaten Iran and say, "I'm going to bomb you again," and the usual crap, Araqchi would tell Sharif face-to-face—they have a very good interpersonal relationship—"Look, we're getting out of here. There's nothing for us to do here. It's completely absurd." So actually, sorry, Sharif was panicking, of course, the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

He would call General Asim Munir and say, "Look, let's go out there and grab the Iranians and try to bring them back again, and try to explain to them that we're doing everything to smooth the situation." So they did this three times, which is completely nuts. And in the end, can you believe that the people around Vance—not Vance himself—they were telling the Pakistanis to tell the Iranians, "Look, don't pay attention to those vociferations on Truth Social coming out of Washington. We are here, and we want to deal with you guys, even if we're not talking face-to-face." This is another important piece of information, Nima. Both delegations never spoke one single word to each other. Everything went through the middleman, mostly the Pakistanis, but also the Qataris.

So it was a back and forth all the time. I'm sure many of you have seen the video where Arakchi enters the room—he goes straight to Sharif. They talk to each other. Arakchi doesn't even look at the back of the room where Vance was looking at him, like a deer caught in the headlights. Arakchi didn't even look. They were somehow confused. Completely confused. You can tell by the footage that obviously he didn't know what was going on. What our source also told us is that from the beginning, they were not supposed to meet. It was agreed by both sides. But then the Americans set up a trap. The first time the Iranian delegation entered the room, the Americans wanted to have the cameras rolling and a handshake.

When the Iranians noticed that, they said, no bloody way we're going to shake hands with these people. And this, in Iran, would go down—and you can confirm—would go down very, very badly, right? So this was the first walkout. There were two others, right? And that explains, because Vance was expecting to go to the center of the room and shake hands with Arakchi. Never happened. So... another one of the walkouts, the third walkout, was the most dangerous of them all, because basically Arakchi told Sharif, that's it, now it's definitive. Okay, you tried to explain to us twice, a third time, come on, it's too much. You know what happened.

Prince Faisal, Minister of Foreign Relations of Saudi Arabia, called Hassan Muneer personally, on Hassan Muneer's phone, because he was following everything, of course. And he told Muneer, look, this thing cannot fail. These were his words, according to our source. And our source knows because he was at the table. He's Pakistani. He was at the table. And obviously, he heard from Muneer what they talked about on the phone. And then Faisal, Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, made two pledges

to Muneer directly. And he also said, look, I'm going to call the Iranians after I talk to you, and I'm going to tell them the exact same thing I'm telling you now. Number one, we can guarantee the money.

If Trump decides to walk out and not pay the \$12 billion—it's \$6 billion first, then more than \$6 billion in the second phase, and then \$12 billion in the third phase, total \$24 billion. If Trump says no, no problem. We, Saudi Arabia, we guarantee that you, Iran, are going to get the money. And on top of that, Qatar, which was in the room already, had already pledged to Iran, look, don't worry, your money is in our banks. So whatever the Americans do, we tell our banks to give you the money that is yours. So can you imagine, Nima, I would say in the space of less than an hour or so, you have two major GCC nations promising to Iran that Iran is going to get its money. This was enormous.

And the second thing, that was the second part of the phone call, Faisal said, look, to speed things up, you guys should come to Riyadh, which is something that is going to happen between today and tomorrow. A high-level Pakistani delegation with Sharif, the Prime Minister, and Munir, the Field Marshal. They're going to Riyadh. They're going to meet with MBS face-to-face. And what are they going to do? They're going to upgrade their military pact, which will include, of course... At the moment, we can define it as a Pakistani-guaranteed security umbrella for Saudi Arabia that can be extended to other GCC members, starting with Qatar, perhaps Bahrain and Kuwait. The UAE is another story, much more complicated, later on.

And, of course, this might include—I wouldn't say directly, but Egypt—which was part of the first four Sunnis when they met before the first meeting in Islamabad, brokered by the Pakistanis between the Americans and the Iranians—and Turkey, which was part of this first meeting. They might consider that Turkey is part of NATO. They might say, okay, we don't disagree with that. And the most important thing: Iran will not disagree because the Pakistanis informed Iran in the first place. The Chinese talked to Iran about that. The Chinese, the Pakistanis, and the Iranians are in close alignment. And China wants to have a good relationship between Iran and the GCC because it suits Chinese geoeconomic interests especially.

So everything is, you know, when you put it all together, what happened in the space of roughly one hour in Bürgenstock in Switzerland changed the whole picture drastically. And without American interference, even though they were over there in the palace. Which, by the way, very funny to all of you—do you know who owns the Bürgenstock Palace in Switzerland? The Qatari royal family, once again. So it's fascinating. It's really a thriller. It's a James Bond thing, no question about that. But in the end, at least we had, I would say, the lineaments of "let's start discussing those 14 points seriously." Obviously, after Switzerland, the whole thing started to derail.

For obvious reasons, Nima and all of you are on this. You know who is trying to derail the MOU. And it's not only that—that's cult. It's the enormously powerful Zionist axis between Washington, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, and New York. And the neocons. And, most important, Donald

Trump's donors, starting with Miriam Adelson, who practically bankrolled most of Trump's campaign. And we had already an article, which was obviously dictated by her, signed by some nobody in Israel, published in a newspaper that is owned by the Adelsons, basically saying that Trump betrayed us. So this is already the start of a public campaign against Trump.

So he is cornered. Cornered by the Zionist lobby, cornered by the neocons, cornered by a lot of people inside the Republican Party, cornered by the Democrats, and cornered by public opinion and the numbers. And the fact that he's not controlling the Strait of Hormuz. He's vociferating about this every day. Iran controls the Strait of Hormuz. Iran says today we're going to have five ships, tomorrow ten ships, maybe seventy ships, and tomorrow maybe we're going to have one or two, depending on how you, United States, behave. So this is the actual situation on the ground. And for a guy with the ego of the Milky Way like him, he simply cannot live with that. But at the same time, he is looking at his constraints. And back to the theme of this column that you showed on screen.