

Larry Johnson: Russia's Naval Blockade of Odessa & Ukraine's Attack on Iranian Ship

Larry Johnson discusses Russia's Naval Blockade of Odessa & Ukraine's Attack on Iran. Johnson is a former CIA intelligence analyst who also worked at the U.S. State Department's Office of Counterterrorism. Read Larry Johnson's Sonar21: <https://sonar21.com/> Buy merchandise: <https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com/en-nok> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. Larry Johnson joins us again, a former CIA analyst who also worked at the U.S. State Department's Office of Counterterrorism. So it's good to see you again, Larry.

#Larry Johnson

Thank you, Glenn. I'm glad to see you're staying busy. Aren't we all? I'm trying to.

#Glenn

Well, there was a lot of euphoria in the Western media because of all of these attacks by Ukraine and, well, let's be honest, also attacks by NATO on the Russian ships in the Sea of Azov as well as in the Black Sea. And as always, one never thinks about the escalation in terms of the retaliation coming. And we now, especially over the past weeks, see the retaliation in full swing. That is, the Russians are pounding Odessa and Odessa's ports quite heavily. We even see the FABs being used, that is, the very powerful bombs which have been modified so they can now glide to their target. We also see that the Black Sea ships of Ukraine, or even just any ships heading towards Ukrainian ports, are being hunted, essentially seemingly making Ukraine a de facto landlocked country. How are you reading the, I guess, the Russian strategies and the direction this is going?

#Larry Johnson

Now, Russia's taking the gloves off. You know, we got a hint of this from Dmitry Peskov about four weeks ago, where he commented on successive days. I believe he made a comment on Monday to one reporter, and then a comment the next day to a different outlet, and said, look, this is no longer a special military operation. This is a war, and it's a war with Europe. So it was acknowledging the

state of it. It was after that that we began seeing a dramatic increase in Russia's attacks on Kyiv and other cities, going after—you know, and that coincided with the warnings that were issued by Sergei Lavrov and a variety of Russian officials to Westerners that, you know, don't stay in Kyiv.

If you're staying in Kyiv, you're going to, you know, potentially be killed. Get out. You're, you know, or you're assuming all the risk. So they started that. And then, you know, what was remarkable is for the last four-plus years, Russia had not made any attempt to close Odesa. Odesa was still a functioning port. Ships were coming and going generally at leisure. I mean, Russia—there were occasional attacks on some infrastructure, some ships—but for the most part, Russia left it alone, going back to an agreement that Russia had made, foolishly in my view, with the United Nations to allow the grain to flow out of Ukraine, and Ukraine took great advantage of it.

So when the Ukrainians and Europeans thought, oh, let's see if we can destroy the Russian Navy in the Azov or try to take out Russian ships in the Black Sea, Russia said, okay, enough. And man, did they turn it up. So Odesa is now no longer a functioning port. It is closed. Closed for business. Closed for the foreseeable future. And this is, I don't know if you want to call it slow strangulation or quick strangulation, but it's strangling the Ukrainian economy. And the Ukrainians are going to—they're deprived of critical imports, and they're also deprived of critical cash flow that stemmed from exports that they made in the past. And Russia's, you know, they're being indiscriminate.

Any ship that's headed there, they don't care what flag it's carrying. They're blowing it out of the water. And the message got through. Maersk, which is one of the largest international shipping companies, basically said, "Okay, we're out. We're done. We're not going back into Odesa or Mykolaiv, for that matter." So this has really added a whole other dimension to this war. And, you know, apart from the destruction of key military production facilities in Kyiv, and now with the closure of Odesa, meanwhile, significant acceleration in ground advances all along the line of contact in eastern Ukraine. The Russians, I think, are moving much quicker now and enjoying much more success than many analysts, especially in the West, had predicted.

#Glenn

I'm wondering if Ukraine and NATO did Russia a favor here, because I think one of the reasons why they didn't shut down Ukrainian shipping in the past is because, well, for one, it would entail striking ships which weren't even Ukrainian, and also it would disrupt a lot of the trade with Russia's partners in the Global South. So, again, Russia may have fallen out of favor with many countries which are sympathetic toward it, but now with these Ukrainian-backed, NATO-backed attacks on Russian ships, you know, even Russia's closest partners and anyone who will be affected would have some understanding for this, because what is Russia going to do, sit by and do nothing?

But it does beg the question, though, that whenever Ukraine is on its back foot or things aren't going well for the United States, they always go back to diplomacy, as we see in Iran, for example. So how do you see this? Do you think the Americans will be able to push through another grain deal

that is a ceasefire in the Black Sea, something along these lines? Because I know the Russians probably want some peace ahead of the elections and all, but again, why give up now? Or would they set a ceasefire into the future and then just destroy everything up until then?

#Larry Johnson

No, I think that they'll reject any U.S. initiative on this front. They see the United States—and Lavrov has made this point repeatedly—the United States is agreement-incapable. And the United States has broken, violated every single agreement they've made, including the ones they made with Putin in Alaska last year. So there's no foundation of trust between Russia and the West on any count. That's number one. Number two, going into the election, the sentiment of the Russian populace, from what I've gleaned, is, if anything, they're going to punish any politician who wants to go soft and wants to advocate negotiations. They want to get revenge. They want to destroy Ukraine now. And militarily, the quicker, the better.

So, and, you know, I think, again, Professor Karaganov has been, you know, he's not just some guy sitting around offering his opinion. I think he has a real good handle on sort of the feelings and beliefs and desires of the Russian people. And he's always on the cutting edge, expressing, you know, it needs to go this direction. And, you know, he wasn't just—he wasn't advocating a confrontation with Europe, but he's just reading the tea leaves. That's where it's headed. And anyone who tries to back off from that and pretend that that's not where it's going is, you know, not accurately reading the room, as they say with actors or comedians. Read the room, know your audience, how they're reacting. And the Russian audience wants—they want Ukraine dismantled so it can no longer do any harm.

#Glenn

I noticed that all the Ukrainian attacks on the Black Sea, Russian ports, ships, it also had some additional impact which the U.S. didn't care for. That is, it undermined the ability of Kazakhstan to export its oil. And not only has this unfortunate impacts on the markets, but Chevron has some direct oil investments itself and interest there with the same Kazakh oil. So, again, I think that's probably another reason why the U.S. might want to put some restraint. They probably looked the other way as long as they were dealing a lot of pain to the Russians. But now that the tables have turned, I guess, yeah, it's time for peace or diplomacy.

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, it was quite a— it was a rebuke, pretty strong rebuke to Zelensky.

#Glenn

Well, it's often pointed out that the Ukraine war and the Iran war are essentially two fronts of the same larger war. You can, of course, add the economic war on China into this mix, the objective, of course, of restoring this global primacy. But, you know, these two battlefields seem to have merged even more now. That is, we saw Ukraine actually attack an Iranian ship in the Caspian Sea. And from what I'm seeing, the Iranian foreign minister now warning that Iran would retaliate. I think he put on social media something along the lines, "This cannot go unanswered." Do you think the Iranians might move forward with this? Because it doesn't look like the Ukrainians would care for another frontline, I guess.

#Larry Johnson

Well, Iran has ballistic missiles that can reach Ukraine, particularly Odessa and Kiev. Because this was a maritime target, I would anticipate that the Iranians would likely go after something in Odessa. Now, I doubt if they're going to do this on their own. I think that they will closely coordinate with Russia because Russia's already pounding the stuffing out of Ukraine. And to be blunt about it, one more Iranian missile in the mix isn't going to—you know, that's not going to send some devastating message to Kiev. They'll look and go, "Okay, we got another missile." They've already got one too many coming in. But, you know, from Iran's standpoint of salvaging its honor, you know, you don't get to attack us.

We'll come back and attack you. So I personally think they'd be better off just saving their missiles to use against the United States and Israel. That's where the current threat lies. But this does highlight how this whole affair has involved both theaters. Now, I believe one of the reasons Zelensky launched that attack, or ordered the attack on the ship in the Caspian, was more to try to get some credit from Trump for, "Hey, I'm with you in your battle against those crazy Iranians. We're right there on your team." But the other part of this, how the two theaters have come together, is it has exposed the global weakness of the United States. Because here's Zelensky pleading for more Patriot missiles, PAC-3 missiles.

The United States doesn't have any. They're basically out. We don't have any to give you, which means there's not a single country in Europe with an air defense system that can defend against the ballistic missiles that Russia's firing that could be deployed to Ukraine. So Ukraine now is completely exposed, completely vulnerable. And I'm not sure that that lesson has fully sunk in among all the European NATO allies. But the United States is, in some aspects, a paper tiger. It looked good on paper, but in terms of actually being able to perform and deliver, it's got some real weaknesses that have been exposed over the course of the last 16, 18 months, both in the battles with the Houthis and two military confrontations with Iran.

#Glenn

I heard some rumors, though, that perhaps Iran would attack European energy interests in the Middle East. Not direct attacks on Europe, of course, but its energy interests in the Middle East because, well, under the logic that Zelensky does that on his own, that his Western handlers would have approved of this. Again, I haven't seen this being verified in any way. Do you know? Have you heard any of this, or if it's likely?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, that's news to me. I had not heard that. Well, not news yet.

#Glenn

Like I said, a rumor.

#Larry Johnson

But it would, I mean, it would be one. You've got to figure, just to retaliate—you know, to fire a missile, okay, we fired a missile at a Ukrainian target. You know, I think you want a little bit more bang for your buck. You want it to send a message. So how do you do that? I don't know what remaining European facilities are in the Gulf region that haven't been touched and haven't been significantly damaged over the course of the first 46 days—42 days of the war, or 43, I guess it is. So it is...

#Larry Johnson

You know, clearly Iran wants to send a message, but I'm not sure. You know, I guess their planners, they've figured something out. My guess, though, is they may go after a ship. You know, it could be a European ship that's trying to get into Odessa.

#Glenn

I'm just guessing the Iranians probably watched for four and a half years the Europeans using, and the Americans, for that matter, using Ukraine as a launching pad to strike Russia. And they probably don't want to go down that road of incremental escalation in which they essentially permit the same. And I guess the same problem for Russia has always been that it can bomb as much as it wants in Ukraine. It doesn't really matter that much to the Europeans and Americans because, you know, as long as the retaliation isn't against them.

It would be interesting, though, if the British now—they seem to be getting involved deeper in Iran, at least that's what the new prime minister indicates—if the Russians were not there yet, obviously, but donate some long-range missiles to the Iranians for some targets in the UK, I guess, for retaliation against the Storm Shadows. Again, nothing I've heard is in the cards, but you can see

where this proxy conflict could go because we stepped over so many lines. It wouldn't surprise me if the other side would do the same. Yeah.

#Larry Johnson

Well, I was just going to say that one of the limiting factors here, I don't think that has been appreciated, is the global shortage of diesel and aviation fuel. It has been caused because of the cutoff of oil out of the Persian Gulf. Now, I keep getting notes from people saying, "Oh, you don't understand. You can make diesel and jet fuel from sweet crude." And I say, folks, you have not paid attention to what I've been writing. In the United States, 70% of the refineries are built and designed to handle only—let me emphasize that—only sour crude. Those that say, "Well, yeah, you can create diesel and jet fuel out of sweet crude."

Yes, you can. I'm not denying that at all. But the problem we face, particularly in the United States, is that to produce diesel and jet fuel in the quantities the United States needs, it needs sour crude, and that sour crude is no longer available. Period. That's what people need to understand. The amount available has been reduced because the flow has stopped out of the Persian Gulf. Now, other suppliers, such as Canada, Mexico, and Venezuela, they can't just flip a switch and say, "Oh yeah, we'll boost output 50%, 100%." No, that's not how it works. And that's not how it is working.

So undergirding all of this is, like in Europe's case, four years ago, five years ago, I think they were paying like, you know, 10 euros for, I forget what quantity of gas. Well, now that price is like 65, 75 euros for what they were paying 10 just four or five years ago. They're trying to buy liquid natural gas on the spot market, except once those ships get loaded up, particularly out of the United States, and they're headed towards one destination, the Chinese and the other Asians are called up and said, "Hey, how much, you know, what's your load going to cost?" They said, "Oh, you know, \$150 a barrel." They said, "Okay, we'll give you \$180." That ship turns, heading to Asia.

#Larry Johnson

So the European market is very, very, very tight, and they're going to have a lot of problems come winter—not having enough diesel, not having enough jet fuel, and not having enough liquid natural gas. And the impact on the economy, it's already being felt across the various countries. And that's what makes it so laughable when they're talking about, "Oh, we're going to fund the war for Ukraine." Hell, they can't even fund their own domestic programs, much less kick up multiple billions of dollars to throw at Ukraine. And they don't have the weapons systems that would be required. So, yeah, they can send money, and that money finds its way into the pockets of Zelensky and his cronies and makes its way back into banks in the UAE and, you know, enters the global laundry machine.

#Glenn

I've seen in the German media that they now pay five times more for their gas than what they paid Russia. And of course, my first instinct is they brought this on themselves. I mean, the Germans have not been very passive here. They've been very active, yes. Of course, the Nord Stream attack was done likely by the United States, but they made sure to look the other way and even tried to blame the Russians for it. So, no, they don't want to cut themselves off from Russian energy. They're still the ones who don't want to pick up the phone and have supply renewed. They were fueling the conflict as well. So, no, it's strange to see this kind of self-harm being done. I didn't think this was possible.

It would be unthinkable in the past, but here we are. But another area where these two wars obviously mix is when it comes to what you were discussing, the shortage of energy as well as the fertilizers, which will fuel the food crisis. First, the Europeans and the United States put a ban on Russia, also partially on Belarus. And then it spread to the Persian Gulf. And with Yemen's growing involvement now in the war, also in direct conflict with Saudi Arabia, we see the Red Sea also getting shut down. Not fully, but it seems that's where we're going. How long can this go on? I mean, what indicators would you look at in terms of how close they are now to pushing the global economy off a cliff?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, we're on the precipice. So let's start with one of the mitigating factors so far: the strategic petroleum reserves in various countries. The United States, they made an announcement this last week. So let's say the total strategic petroleum reserve was like 800 million barrels, or 750. But of that amount, you needed to maintain, it was assumed, a minimum of 140 million barrels in these salt caverns. And the reason is, if the levels were drawn down below roughly 20% of the volume, then that meant there would be more water in those caverns, and the water would mix with the salt and dissolve, and then weaken this and basically cause the caverns to collapse so they could never be used again for oil storage. Well, just last week, Department of Energy announced, oh, instead of 140, now we can go down to 70.

#Glenn

Now, that's red-light, danger-flashing territory.

#Larry Johnson

But the reason they're doing that is they don't have any alternative right now. And they don't want to admit how desperate the situation is. And so they continue to play these games. And we saw in the oil futures market today, oh great, price of oil is dropping. And what these people don't seem to understand is, let's assume that the United States and Iran, you know, they revive the MOU, that it comes back to life. The United States finally agrees to do what it agreed to do, what it was supposed to do during the first round and didn't. And so, voilà, tankers are being loaded up.

Well, the first problem you've got is in Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and to a lesser extent the UAE, you've got damaged tanks, oil terminals. The damage varies country to country. In some, you're looking at what might be days of repairs, and others at what might be a year or more of repairs. So there's a question about how much actual volume can be shipped out of the Gulf, number one. And then once you put it on a ship, these are not some modern spacecraft that can travel at the speed of light around the globe. They go at about 12 miles an hour, you know, sort of an average bicycle speed.

And it'll take, you know, to get to the United States from the Persian Gulf, it'll take 40, 45 days. So right there, you've added at least a month. So even if everything was working perfectly as of tomorrow, we wouldn't begin to see any real significant change in supplies and storage and processing until maybe middle of September. More likely, though, I think we're looking at delays that could last through December of this year. And then on top of it, you've got, like in Saudi Arabia, the damage the Houthis did the other day to the Jizan petrochemical refinery, the most modern one in the world of that type. And it's still burning as of this morning.

#Glenn

Well, the disaster seems predictable. So you would, again, assume that the first instinct would then be to return to diplomacy. That is, first of all, to save the global economy, because, as Trump recognized before the MOU, this was in a very bad state. They only had a few weeks left of access to certain types of oil. But also in Ukraine, there could be a push for diplomacy as well because, as you said, the front lines, things are falling apart very quickly, especially up in the Kharkov region, as well as Donbas. I think developments there are going much faster than people had expected, as you said. So, you know, there would be interest there in some diplomacy as well.

And same with Iran, because the U.S., as we keep reading, is running out of important weapons, which take a long time to replenish. And also, they discovered that instead of being exhausted, the Iranians somehow have missiles now that travel faster and are also deadlier. That is, they're able to evade all of these air defenses. What is the future now of diplomacy, though? Because it's been used in such a deceptive way, not just by the Americans, but the Europeans as well. Again, I think everyone wouldn't shut the door. They would want to talk, but there's no trust. It's very difficult to do proper diplomacy and deals without trust, I would think.

#Larry Johnson

Right, right. Well, let's start with the situation in Ukraine. Over the course—so, the United States unleashed a 13-day bombing campaign, initially described as trying to degrade Iran's ability to interfere with shipping in the Persian Gulf. And then, at the last moment, Trump said, "No, no, no, we're trying to stop their nuclear program." So even he couldn't define what the objective was. And there were three different attempts. The first was by Qatar, at the insistence of the U.S., to

approach Iran, see if they could restart talks. Iran said no. Next was Islamabad, Sharif and Munir. They tried to re-engage the Iranians, and the Iranians told them, "No, we're not ready to talk to the United States."

Then this last week, Azizi, I think is the name of the prime minister of Iraq, he went and met with Trump in D.C., and then after that visit, he hightailed it to Tehran, sat down with the Iranians, and came away empty-handed. Now, we got a hint yesterday from Israel, of all places, that apparently the talks—and Trump is admitting that today—that the talks are now, they're communicating via Pakistan and Qatar. And when Bibi Netanyahu reported that Trump demanded, didn't ask, didn't say, "Would you consider?" but demanded that Israel withdraw its troops from Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank.

Well, the reason Trump did that is the Iranians are telling the Pakistanis, "We're not going to entertain any negotiated settlement of this until these promises that were part of the first MOU are implemented." So, you know, if the United States was to implement a show of good faith, fine, then we've got a basis to talk. Otherwise, we have nothing to talk about. So, and this is where, you know, for the U.S., with all of Trump's bombast and belligerence and threats, we come back to the oil shortage is the problem. It is going to cripple the economy. It's gradual right now, but by the end of September, first of October, the inflation is going to be out of control. There are going to be significant shortages, both with diesel, with aviation fuel.

And that's assuming at this point that nothing else happens beyond, you know, like the United States does not again start some massive, trying to do, you know, the gates of hell, massive bombing campaign. So Trump's incentivized to try to get Iran back to the table. Iran's—they're not—they're taking their time. They are going to play hard to get, and they're going to insist on preconditions up front that the United States previously may not have been willing to accept. But I don't think it's going to have a choice, because not only is the fuel an issue, but the United States no longer has the weapons inventory with precision missiles to take on Iran, much less be able to take on China or Russia.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, that's what I thought. If the U.S. wants to go back to diplomacy, they could do some kind of a buy-in. That is, yeah, something to show good faith. For example, get Israel to pull out from Lebanon or unfreeze some Iranian assets, just to show it's not just another trick in order to essentially return to something that looks like the MOU. I'm wondering if something would be possible in the war against Russia as well, though, because when the United States—well, the Trump administration—first came back, you had Hegseth making the point that any peace would essentially rest on three categories. That means no NATO, there would be no security guarantees, and Ukraine would have to accept territorial concessions.

It looks like, also, whatever they agreed upon in Anchorage, some of this would have to be included. It just seems strange that everything has been walked back, especially the European leaders. They still talk about the path to NATO membership, which can't be revoked. As soon as this conflict is over, they will become part of NATO. It just seems this will be something the U.S. could take off the table. But again, I don't see it happening. I think Trump bought into the whole "the tide has turned" narrative. But how do you see the possibility of returning to diplomacy with the Russians on this? Or do you think there's no interest in Washington yet?

#Larry Johnson

I don't think it matters what the interest is in Washington. There's no interest in Russia. Again, Lavrov's comments have been scathing, directed at the Americans. And that little, that brief 35-minute sit-down with Marco Rubio this past week—it was 35 minutes. That's just enough time to say, "Hello, how are you? Having a nice day?" And, you know, we really have nothing to talk about. Putin's made it very clear that, you know, in the past, Russia was willing—I mean, go back to March, April 2022. At that point, Russia was willing to withdraw from the Donbass, provided there were verified guarantees, solid guarantees, to protect the rights of the Russian speakers in the Donbass, as well as the Russian Orthodox Church.

Well, the United States thought it was a great idea to sabotage that, did so with the help of Boris Johnson. So then Russia readjusted its demands. The next set of demands were basically, you know, followed the elections that took place, or the plebiscites, in Zaporizhia, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk in September 2022. All former oblasts of Ukraine went back into the Russian Republic. And so by June 14th, 2024, Putin, with the foreign minister, said, "Hey, this is the new deal." The new deal is the West has to recognize all five—Crimea, Zaporizhia, Kherson, Donetsk, Luhansk—all five as permanent members of the Russian Republic.

NATO needs to get out completely of Ukraine, have nothing more to do with it. And Ukraine needs to have elections. There were more demands, but that was the heart and soul of it. And at that point, Russia was not going to stay indefinitely in any of the buffer territories, such as Sumy, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk. And so that was the deal then. Well, now, just in the last two weeks, Putin's made it clear: A, these buffer territories that we're taking in Sumy and Kharkiv, in particular Dnipropetrovsk, we're not giving those back. Those are staying with us, number one. Number two, we're going to reestablish Novorossiia.

So, you know, the traditional part of Novorossiia that was in the 19th century is coming back. And that means most of the territory that is east of the Dnieper River will return to Russia. That means also Odessa and Nikolaev, and perhaps even Kiev. Now, the Russians don't want Western Ukraine. It's a headache. They'll let that place cave in on itself. Let the Poles and the Hungarians, the

Romanians, pick over the scraps of meat left on the skeleton. But the Russians are in no mood. They're not going to make any concessions at this point. The only outcome is an unconditional surrender by Ukraine.

#Glenn

But a key problem, though, would be a deal with NATO. It could put an end to the whole proxy war aspect. Because the key problem, what makes Ukraine a very attractive proxy for NATO, is not just a huge amount of men which can be dragged into the army and forced to fight Russia, but it's also the massive territory. That is, even if Russia would seize all territories east of the Dnieper, including Nikolaev and Odessa, it would still leave a huge chunk of territory which the NATO countries could, in perpetuity, use as a launching pad for strikes against Russia. It's a bit too attractive for NATO to give up, I think, the idea that you can fight the Russians with immunity. But wouldn't the Russians then be interested in some kind of a deal which puts an end to the proxy war, or is the trust issue then the problem again?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, no, I think they'd be willing at that point to get an agreement with the European countries that, A, they're going to get out of NATO, and they're going to stop threatening Russia. Now, and this is where I think that that might actually be a viable strategy. Some would say no, simply because the economic conditions in Europe, the way they're trending, the trajectory is towards an economic recession at best, economic depression very likely. And just the catastrophe is their industries are being dismantled. Their energy costs are soaring to astronomical levels. So, you know, Europe, it's not like Europe's sitting in a strong position financially.

They're certainly not strong militarily. And then this goes back to one of the other points that Professor Karaganov has made: a need to restore Europe—need to basically make Europe afraid of Russia again. Because right now, Europe seemingly is treating Russia like it's a non-entity, and they can do whatever they want to it and don't have to fear reprisal or retaliation. And I think that that kind of foolish behavior is going to come back and actually bite them in the ass, that Russia at some point will be compelled to hit targets in Europe simply because of the reckless actions of European leaders.

#Glenn

Yeah, I think, well, I think most in Russia now see this as being a bit of a mistake. That is because over the years we saw that the U.S. and NATO countries essentially put themselves in a position where they were able to strike, be it Iraq, Syria, Libya, and no one would fight back essentially because they would know that it would be too much of an escalation. So they just took it, yeah, took

the beating essentially. Iran was quite careful not to go down that path. That is, if you strike Iran, they will hit back very hard. I think the Russians realized they made a mistake by essentially allowing this to happen.

But my last question was just, I guess, another thing that brings together these wars would be America's use of frontline states, because most of America's frontline states, they had a pretty sweet deal, I think, especially after World War II. It had very generous trade agreements, especially with the Europeans. It made sure that its frontline states developed better than, you know, the communist alternatives, right? But now we see in the Middle East there's a possibility that many of the Gulf states might have to make some adjustments after this war, recognizing that they've been on the wrong horse, or at least recognize that Iran's position is very much strengthened, and this limits what the U.S. can do.

I don't see any of these talks taking place in Europe, though. I think there they did the exact opposite, just doubled down on obedience to Washington and hope that they will be rewarded somehow. So far, they only receive contempt, for good reasons. You know, if you give up your own national interest. But how do you see this, especially in the Middle East? Do you think which states might try to peel off, not move away from Washington, but at least begin to diversify a bit, take into account Iran's security interests, link themselves a bit closer with the Chinese or Russians, Indians, anything, to avoid excessive dependence on the United States, which, you know, points a target on their back.

#Larry Johnson

Now, the problem children in that equation are Kuwait and Bahrain. I think they're still in such a codependent relationship with Washington, they can't free themselves. I do see the Saudis, Qataris, and the UAE. Even though the UAE has a long history of being seen as just an Israeli proxy country, nonetheless, there are some pragmatists in that group, and they understand that the path that they're currently on now is destructive to them, self-destructive. And similarly, the Saudis—you got to wonder who is advising them to attack the Houthis. You know, if you're going to get a tit-for-tat battle, you don't want to be in a tit-for-tat battle with somebody who has nothing to lose.

In other words, they've lost everything they could possibly lose. They don't care now. But my God, you've got a lot that you can lose. And we saw that the other day, when, you know, the Houthis had retaliated, striking air bases in Saudi Arabia. And then they continued by blockading Saudi ships. They didn't actually blockade the Bab al-Mandab. They were going after Saudi ships that were carrying oil or going to carry oil. So the Saudis said, "Oh, we'll teach you." So they went and decided, "Let's bomb Hodeidah port." Well, the Houthis wasted no time. They launched missiles at this petrochemical refinery in the southwest corner of Saudi Arabia near the border with Yemen.

It's called Jizan. It is the most modern refinery facility of its kind in the world. Saudi Aramco had it built. Man, it was state of the art. But it's still on fire here two days later. And the estimates are it's

going to take at least four months to get it back online. So what the Houthis showed is, yeah, you can blow up some stuff at our port, but by God, we can cripple your economy, which they absolutely can. They left the oil terminals at Yanbu, north and south terminals, alone for now. So from the Saudi standpoint, they're caught in much the same way the United States is caught with Iran.

The Saudis are caught with Yemen in that they don't really have a clear escalation route, one that they can easily prevail in. Instead, if they try to prevail militarily, they're going to incur so much frustration, damage—enormous, potentially catastrophic damage to their economy—that it's not worth it. So that they now, if they're thinking rationally, are going to be compelled to seek a negotiated settlement with the Houthis. You know, they'll entertain a negotiated settlement, but it's going to be more on their terms—that, you know, this blockade and this animosity stemming out of the Saudis was going to stop. So the problem all the Gulf countries have right now is they were promised protection by the United States.

Hey, you know, buy our bonds, buy our bonds, buy our weapons systems, buy our Patriot missiles, buy our THAADs, and we got your back, man. Nobody will touch you. They won't dare because we're the United States. Well, the events of, you know, we're now five months into this since February 28th, have shown that those U.S. promises were bogus promises. The United States couldn't protect them. Just the opposite happened. The United States not only failed to protect them and to provide any kind of air defense shield, the United States is bugging out. It's retreating. It's leaving those bases because it can no longer stay there. It's too dangerous.

#Glenn

Yeah, I have to say, though, that Yemen played this quite well. As you said, they not just dealt enormous pain to Saudi Arabia, but the fact that they left out the more important targets as well, showing that we can escalate, we can do much more pain. I think that is quite powerful because now the Saudis are put in a very awkward position. They either have to just accept all the damage and walk away, or, knowing that the Yemenis can destroy or cripple their economy... So it's, yeah, it's strange that they allow themselves to be pulled into this war.

I just saw some new footage of, um, of Lindsey Graham back from the beginning of March of this year, where he was making the point that, well, you know, within three, four weeks, we're going to have some Iranian cities already falling, and the Arab states will take a direct involvement in this war. I mean, they did get involved in this war, but they're taking a huge punishment for it also. You would think that the security architecture built up around when the U.S. was the sole superpower, that, well, this can't stay in place anymore. I'm just wondering. It looks like a messy affair, though. These kind of huge structures don't just disappear overnight without any problems. Anyways, do you have any final thoughts before we finish off?

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, so the negotiation process right now, it's underway. China's heavily invested in it. Pakistan, Qatar have invested in it. The United States is the one really behind the scenes saying, okay, we've got to get out of this. Iran is biding its time. It's going to insist that it gets what it wants or this war will continue. They're quite content. You've got a few more ships now flowing out on the Iranian side. Still nothing through the Omani Channel. But reportedly, Iran has had good talks with the Omanis, and maybe they finally reached an agreement that Oman will play ball with Iran.

#Glenn

Yeah, it appears that's the direction it's going. I think Oman is most likely the country that's most likely to work with Iran, which kind of works well, given that they share the Strait of Hormuz. Anyways, Larry, always a pleasure.

#Larry Johnson

Hey, Glenn, thanks so much, man. And we'll look forward to being back with you again.