



Pepe Escobar: Iran War – The Geopolitics Behind the Escalation

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Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day. This is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Kalamata, Greece, on April 20th, 2026, for Reason2Resist. Today we're very pleased to be joined by Pepe Escobar. Pepe hardly needs an introduction, but for those few of you who might not be familiar with his groundbreaking journalism, Pepe is a Brazilian journalist known for his work in alternative media and geopolitical analysis. He has reported extensively from regions around the world, most notably West and Central Asia, and has contributed to numerous international publications over the years. Just a few of them I'll mention – Asia Times, Al Jazeera and RT. Thank you so much for joining us today, Pepe.

Pepe Escobar (PE): My pleasure, Dimitri. Greetings from Buddhist Southeast Asia, peaceful latitude.

DL: I hope they're still finding the capacity to meditate in these troubled times.

PE: Yes, we badly need it, right? Meditation and massage.

DL: Especially here in Greece. Pepe, I'd like to begin by just reminding people to like and share this video if they find it to be informative. Please join our subscription base if you haven't already done so. Help us to expand the reach of our resistance journalism. So, with that, Pepe, after US naval forces attacked an Iranian cargo ship in international waters yesterday, by all appearances, the so-called ceasefire is hanging by a thread. And first off, I'd like your assessment of why you think the Trump regime took the highly provocative step at this critical moment of attacking a civilian Iranian vessel in international waters during the ceasefire.

PE: Well, because essentially they have no strategy. The whole strategy after this thing went completely sour in the first 24 to 48 hours after the decapitation strike against Ayatollah Khamenei and the leadership – everything is inside the head of a psychopath, sociopath, rattled with acute dementia already and with his sidekick as a tattooed, drunken, former

platoon commander in Iraq. How can you have a strategy when you are facing the geopolitical crossroads of the 21st century everywhere? This is the crux of the war between the declining empire and Eurasia as a whole. So they never had a strategy to begin with. Their tactics are appalling as everyone can see, even Americans in fact.

And now, when we are theoretically in the middle of the road towards Islamabad 2 – Islamabad 1 was not a total disaster because there's a little window open and the Pakistanis, of course, are doing their best to keep it open towards Islamabad 2. So when we are on the brink of a possible Islamabad 2 – by the way, it would be today, but obviously there's no Iranian delegation in Islamabad. They come up with an attack against a civilian Iranian tanker coming from a Chinese port – we don't know what's inside, but it may be something. They focus their lasers on the Touska because they are almost absolutely sure that in the cargo they're going to find a sodium perchlorate, which is an essential component of solid fuel for Iranian ballistic missiles. That's the Touska riddle. Let's put it this way.

But why do it now? Breaking the ceasefire because, as you mentioned correctly, this is an act of war in international waters – what do they expect to gain out of it? Obviously there's no strategy, obviously there's nobody – National Security Council, retired Pentagon generals, whatever – saying, "look, let's wait, there is the end of the ceasefire and there is Islamabad 2, maybe Vance and Ghalibaf can come to some sort of agreement". No, it's out of the blue. It baffles us because it's so childish in geopolitical terms. These people are not even amateurs, you know. They're typical pigeons kicking the chessboard, completely – yes, please go ahead.

DL: I just want to add one thing, and please feel free to disagree with me, although I suspect you'll be in agreement. Even if that cargo ship had jet fuel or just lethal armaments – it could be MANPADS, it could be missile components, it can be any number of things, air defense systems – there's absolutely no violation of international law involved there. The Iranians, as the victims of an aggression, are perfectly entitled to call upon friendly states to help them defend themselves. And so that would not even provide a justification for an attack on the vessel if in fact, they found armaments or jet fuel, rocket fuel, whatever it may be. I assume you share that view, Pepe. Is that fair?

PE: Yeah, of course, I agree with you. And of course, for instance, what Russia is sending, nobody has these details. This is a Ministry of Defense level kind of secret information. They have the famous Astrakhan-Tehran shuttle. It's aerial, never on the surface, no way. And what the Chinese sent to the Iranians – same thing. These are cargo planes coming from China. It's a completely different story. They will never risk sending it through the Indian Ocean. No way. So there's an extra no justification for something that from the start is an act of war, right?

DL: So let's switch to the Red Sea for a moment. Iran's government has threatened to call on its Yemeni alliance, Ansar Allah, to close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. And the Bab el-Mandeb Strait is certainly one of the most important chokepoints in international maritime commerce. You were in Yemen about one year ago, I

understand, and you were on the ground there. I think you may also have had the opportunity to speak to many government officials. What was your assessment at the time about the situation on the ground, the capacity of Ansar Allah after the horrendous attacks it had to sustain from the Israelis and the Americans to contribute to a closure of the strait? And do you think that we are about to see the entry of Ansar Allah into this conflict? They've been, as you noted before we started today, rather quiet during the past six weeks. What's your assessment of where they're likely to go?

PE: They are in a wait-and-see mode at the moment. It's fascinating how quiet they are. We don't see their spokesman. By the way, this guy is a pop idol all across the Global South. We met him. Can you believe that he visited us in our hotel in Sana'a last year? He spent 45 minutes with us. And we were desperate. We were like "why are you here? The Americans may know that you're here". And the guy was unflappable, cool as a cucumber, very well prepared. In fact, the whole Ansar Allah leadership. We met many of them in Sana'a, and then they took us to Sa'dah. Why? Because they wanted to show us the birthplace of Ansar Allah in the mountains of Sa'dah. It's about 120-140 kilometers from the Yemeni-Saudi border. So when you see the geology of Sa'dah, you understand. It is a valley surrounded by mountains. It is perfect for guerrilla warfare. That's where they learn how to do their Yemeni version of Vietnamese guerrilla warfare. Very well-educated people, very well prepared. They explained, for instance, the tradition in engineering, mathematics, and physics since the time of Mao. Can you believe it? That is something that I didn't know at the time. There is a Chinese obelisk on the hill overlooking Sana'a. And do you know what this obelisk is commemorating? Chinese workers during the Mao era that were sent to Yemen to do public work. Very few people in the West know about this. You only know something about this when you go there. So this very close link between Yemen and China dates from the late 50s, 60s already.

Same thing with Russia. For instance, I went to the university in Sa'dah, it's a first class university, by the way, bombed by the Saudis years ago, then they rebuilt it. So there is a long tradition of top level math and science for decades, and of course, with help from the Soviet Union and from China. Well, that explains why a great deal of their industrial military complex is developed by themselves. Of course, they had help from Iran. There's no question about that. But for instance, they've developed their own ballistic missiles. When you have a conversation with them, it's fascinating because it's not only about military matters or geopolitics. There is always a very strong moral, ethic, and spiritual component. For instance, they frame their defense of Gaza in a very, very complex multi-level way. Especially, they are morally obliged to defend "our brothers", the way they frame it. So it's very sophisticated, but it's no wonder. In the Quran, Prophet Muhammad, I think there are more than 40 mentions of Yemenis in the Quran. They practiced original Islam, the real pure seventh century Islam, not the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia. There's no wonder why the Wahhabis hate them. They have no bloody culture. Yemen is a very powerful ancient culture. These are the navigators who brought Islam to Southeast Asia. The first navigators were Yemenis that arrived in Thailand, in Malaysia, in Indonesia. So it's on a whole other level. And it's immensely impressive.

And, of course, in terms of what they can do – you know, serious headaches, not only for the Saudis, but for the American-Israeli Epstein complex. What they can do in the Red Sea in the Bab el-Mandeb, for them is natural. It's natural. They say, "yes, if we need to block it again, we'll do it". This is what they're saying last year. I'm worried this year because I lost contact with some of my friends, we were talking via Telegram and they haven't answered my latest messages, so I am worried. Maybe there is an internal internet problem, yeah, it's quite possible. To give you an idea, Dimitri, they lost all their planes. They were saying, "look, we would like to invite you guys again to come here this year, but we have no planes". They were bombed by the bloody Israelis.

DL: When you refer to the spokesman, I assume you're referring to Mohammed al-Bukhaiti.

PE: Yes, I spent more than one hour talking to al-Bukhaiti in Sana'a. He's extremely well prepared.

DL: We had the opportunity to interview him about a year ago.

PE: You did? OK, great, great.

DL: At the end of it – I don't know if he introduced you to his boys, but they were these wonderful children he brought into the screen at the very end of the interview. And what impressed me about him is, as you said, was his calm, his equanimity, his grace. Not at all the picture that we in the West are given about Ansar Allah officials. But I'm curious to know, Pepe, we've seen these incredible images of masses of people in Sana'a coming out regularly to support the defense of the Palestinian people. Was it your impression when you were there that the public support for this defense of the Palestinian cause and the axis of resistance remains robust?

PE: Dimitri, there's an enormous, I would say it's a mix of a square and a parking lot, enormous, with the mountains in the back – when you see one million people in front of you, it's absolutely mind-boggling. Look, I have been a foreign correspondent for 40 years, everywhere, literally, so you think that you've seen it all. No. When you see something like this, you're like "wow". And of course, I had the supreme honor to have one minute to deliver a message to them. The guy said, do you want to go on stage? Yes, definitely. But please, don't worry. I'm going to be very brief. Give me one minute.

DL: What was your message? I'm most curious to know.

PE: Basically, my message was very simple. And of course the next day I was known because I was on every Yemeni TV channel. We were a very small group of foreigners after all. And basically I said, look, the whole planet identifies with you and they support your struggle. So the crowd – "wow" – which is absolutely correct. And later you have time to speak to many of them. And it's fascinating because they are from different tribes from all over Yemen, not only Houthis from the north. They are from other tribes as well, including

tribes from the deserts in Hadhramaut or towards the east. And even people who were in Aden, the capital, they said, look, Aden has been destroyed because of Arab interference, Emiratis and Saudis. And many people left Aden to go back to Sana'a. There are a lot of people who are former Aden residents who are now in Sana'ah. And they started supporting the Houthis only recently. So this means that the Houthis, they have this factor of agglutination of Yemen, which eventually they will probably, I would say mid to long term, they could even run the whole of the country because Aden essentially is UAE dominated, Saudi UAE, but more UAE. And UAE as we know now is collapsing in real time in front of everyone. The Dubai business model is already dead, and the next is Abu Dhabi, and they're running out of dollars. They're begging the US to have access to dollars. So this is the beginning of the end, and obviously they made their choice, Dimitri. For instance, Qatar, their protector now is Turkey. Saudi Arabia, they have a defense pact with Pakistan, and UAE chose Israel for their part. So they're going to go down eventually.

DL: And what about Bahrain?

PE: Well, Bahrain is fascinating – I love following Iraqi scholars, so the last time I was in Iraq was two years ago in Baghdad, and I met some very, very smart people. Some of them are part of this government. And they are already discussing the post-American Gulf. And they say, look, Bahrain, they have two options: they're going to be absorbed by Saudi Arabia – which is probably not going to happen because the majority is Shiite – or they're going to be absorbed by Iran. That's quite possible. And the UAE, they said, will eventually go back to Oman.

DL: Whoa, that'll be a moment of great rejoicing for the anti-empirialist cause. So let me move over closer to your neck of the woods with my next question, Pepe, and that is the reaction of the Chinese government.

PE: Oof, that's complicated.

DL: It is indeed. I'm really curious to hear what you think – if I could just show you and our audience, there have been a number of statements, but here's the one that came out a couple hours ago. I picked this up from the Irish Times, but apparently it's based on a report from Reuters that President Xi, he called Saudi Arabia's crown prince, which is an interesting decision, and he expressed concern over renewed instability around the strategic waterway. China, the report says, is the main buyer of any Iranian crude. Of course, we know that. And China advocates an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire and insists on resolving conflicts in the Middle East through political and diplomatic channels. This is coming from the state news agency, Xinhua, citing President Xi. And finally, he's reported President Xi to have told the Saudi leader the Strait of Hormuz should remain open to normal passage, as this serves the common interests of regional countries and the international community. So this is extraordinarily neutral and ambiguous.

PE: Yes.

DL: It certainly doesn't sound like any kind of a warning to the United States. What do you make of the statements coming out of the Chinese government today?

PE: They are the masters of understatement, as we all know, and they are never blunt. I'm talking basically about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but especially Xi. Every Xi word is calculated to oblivion, and he always needs to project this image of impartiality, of being neutral. Of course, in the case of China in the Persian Gulf, they have very good relations with Iran, but also with the Persian Gulf monarchies. After all, especially Saudi Arabia, they buy most of the oil in the Persian Gulf from Saudi Arabia. By the way, most of it is paid in Yuan, but it's never advertised that it's paid in Yuan. Otherwise, the Americans will go completely nuts. It's very discrete. But mostly the balance nowadays is more Yuan than petrodollars. And sooner or later, they're going to pick up the phone to Riyadh to say, "from now on, it's only petrodollars".

With Iran, it is already petro-Yuan for a long time, which is one of the reasons for this blockade. Which is a stupid blockade because China has so many sources apart from everything that goes through the Strait of Hormuz. They have Russia – two pipelines, oil and gas. They have Kazakhstan – oil pipeline. They have Turkmenistan – gas pipeline. They have Myanmar – gas pipeline. Not to mention inside, they are 84 to 86 % self-sufficient already. That's something that you see when you go to Xinjiang. When I was in Xinjiang last year, my first shock, because I had not been to Western China for 10 years or so, when you come back after 10 years, it's like, wow, it's totally electrified. And you see forests of wind turbines, solar panels, solar farms with those poles that are reflecting the sun, hundreds of kilometers around. Xinjiang has so much energy that they sell energy to the rest of China. So it's not that China is dependent on the Strait of Hormuz. This is, let's say, 13 % of what they import as oil and gas. It's not a lot. And the Russians already said, in fact Lavrov said I think two days ago max, he said, look, you need more gas, no problem. The power of Siberia II is not ready. It's going to be ready next year. But the power of the Siberia I is almost full capacity but they can start using the spare capacity as well and China will get more gas from Russia. In fact, the number one provider of gas to China now is already Russia. So they are not worried. Not to mention they have reserves for months on end. So it's not complicated at all.

But the Chinese in public – for instance, I spend a lot of time going through some Chinese channels that are not directly linked to the pyramid of information, Xinhua, China Daily, all that. My friends at Guancha in Shanghai, they are semi-independent. But you try to see some of their best academics, they never enter directly into these analyses. Of course, there is a limit to what you may say still, even in completely non-official press. So it's complicated. But I'm going there in three weeks. That would be my best shot to have from themselves how they actually analyze the war in broader terms. Far away it's impossible to know, Dimitri. It's very complicated. Because there is this element of never interrupt your enemy when he is committing serial mistakes, which is the case. So they prefer to be quiet. They're just watching. But now, for instance, I would say this is a crucial example. You have an attack on an Iranian vessel that left from a Chinese port, Gaolan port is in Zhuhai in southern China,

going to Iran. So this is an attack on China as well. So how they're going to react to that specifically, as much as they don't want a direct confrontation. And we should never forget, three weeks before Trump goes to Beijing, the meeting is still scheduled for May 14th. Nobody knows if this meeting is going to happen.

DL: My sort of bigger, maybe a sort of primitive assessment of the situation for China is that if the Iranian government were to fall and were to be replaced, either Iran were to descend into chaos or the government were to be replaced by some regime that is entirely subservient to Washington – effectively, the United States would have a stranglehold over this incredibly important region, one which American military planners after World War II described as a stupendous source of strategic power, the greatest material prize in human history for obvious reasons, not just the resources, it's also the geostrategic location, the trade routes and so forth. And if the United States were to obtain unchallenged control over this region, it would undoubtedly use that power to weaken China to the maximum possible degree. And I imagine that the Chinese must be keenly aware of this, and so I would assume, I could be wrong, that they think they have powerful reasons to assist Iran and to ensure that it doesn't fall. Do you think that that's likely to be their calculus?

PE: Of course it is, Dimitri. And this is very clear for Moscow and Beijing, for the leadership. Iran must not fall, whatever it takes. And if they thought that Iran would be on the brink of regime change, then they would intervene in a more direct way. For the moment they don't need to. First of all because the Iranians don't ask. And this is something that you learn when you talk to them. For instance, Iranian delegations go to Moscow all the time. So I was always talking to them when they were in Moscow. And they were saying, ah, it's okay, no problem. Anything you want or anything we want, we can talk to you. But they also said that they never asked anything from the Russians specifically. And when that comes, the Russians said, if that's the case, we're ready to help immediately if you really need it. So there is this element of trust.

With China, it's more complicated. Because with China, they have a very specific deal. They signed in 2021 the \$400 billion, 25-year energy infrastructure deal. This is very, very complex. And obviously, the Chinese know that they need Iran, because Iran is their focus for the New Silk Roads. The most important partner in central Eurasia for China is Iran. It's the crossroads of all those corridors. There are seven corridors going from Xinjiang across Central Asia towards Europe, eventually. Some of them are blocked, for instance, the Trans-Siberian one for the moment is blocked because of sanctions. But the Chinese built a railway inside Iran to connect to the railways across Central Asia. So from Xinjiang it goes to Kazakhstan, then Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and then it crosses the border to Iran. The Chinese built this railway and guess what happened only a few weeks ago? The Americans bombed a stretch of this railway, which means they bombed a new Silk Road project paid for by the Chinese. So they knew exactly what they were bombing.

So in terms of connectivity corridors for China, Iran is the number one across. Since the ancient Silk roads it was always like that. So obviously they cannot even imagine the

possibility of a pro-American government. But they know that this is not going to happen. The Chinese read the internal situation in Tehran very well and they are closely connected. For instance, Araghchi talks to Wang Yi as much as Lavrov talks to Wang Yi, at the highest level. So they know what's going on and they're not worried that there might be regime change. Especially when they saw the response, which started half an hour after the capitulation strike, they could see that Iran was ready for it.

And of course, they interfere with the way Iran is managing the whole thing. They are very worried, of course, about Hormuz, because from their point of view, obviously it's much better to have the Strait of Hormuz completely open than now. Until, what, two days ago, for Chinese ships, it was absolutely open. And many of them were not even paying the toll. But then, of course, after the American blockade, then they blockaded the strait completely. Obviously, the Chinese don't want that. When they say we want the Strait of Hormuz open, it also means open like it was until a few days ago, because there was already a government-to-government agreement, Iran-China, that the Chinese tankers will be able to do the back and forth with no problem. The problem now is the American interference with this illegal blockade.

DL: Do you think that China has enough leverage over Iran, if push came to shove, to oblige the Iranians to open the Strait of Hormuz, or do you think the Iranian's are perfectly capable of saying, look, this is our ace in the hole, and while we understand your interest in seeing the strait open, this an existential war for us, and we deem it necessary to keep it closed? What do you think the dynamic is?

PE: Absolutely. And don't forget, the Persians are very proud. There's 2,500 years behind them. They are a very proud culture, sure of themselves, they hate any form of foreign interference, and the Chinese are clever enough to not even try foreign interference. They don't admit that in China. Why would they admit it in Iran? Same thing. Of course, at a level that we don't see, at the highest level, messages have been sent to Tehran saying, look, we got your back, but of course, we prefer that we can have our energy traffic undisturbed. We understand that for the moment, it's a little bit complicated. But the Chinese, of course, are always looking ahead, always looking ahead. And because the relationship at the highest level is so strong, they know that even if – there's going to be a new juridical status for the Strait of Hormuz. Everybody knows that. It has already been approved by the Iranian Parliament. They started to discuss with Oman already. So on both territorial waters, there's going to be a toll booth. Inevitably. That's fine with China. Absolutely fine with them, because they know the thing will be tankers from the so-called hostile nations, or for instance, tankers from the UAE. The UAE refuses to pay the tolls, but they're going to have to. Otherwise, that's it. Otherwise they're dead. They simply won't be able to export anymore, period.

DL: We all got to pay the piper sometime, that's what I say.

PE: Yeah, exactly.

DL: So to conclude our discussion – I'd like to shift things, trying to take you all over the world. I'd like to come back to the Eastern Mediterranean where I'm currently situated and if you just bear with me, I want to take a few minutes to kind of set the table for my question.

PE: Go ahead, yes.

DL: My question is going to relate to tensions between Israel and Turkey, and in particular, how Greece and Cyprus play into this because they've clearly aligned themselves with Israel, both economically and militarily. And I'm just going to show one example of this. This is a report from Al Jazeera in February of this year. And in that report, "Greek government officials told Al Jazeera that Greece is interested in jointly developing weapons with Israel. The chairman of the Greek Parliament's Defense Affairs Committee told Al Jazeera – his name is Angelos Syrigos – 'we are an excellent customer of Israeli systems. The leap in our defense relationship will happen when there's co-production of defense systems and common planning'."

There's also strong evidence that Greece is helping Israel and the United States to wage war on Iran. I was recently at the Souda military base, the US/NATO/Greek military base in the north of Crete, and from the Chania airport, which is a joint military civilian project, as we noted, as I reported on Reason2Resist about a week ago, there was a lot of military transport traffic going through that airport. And recently, within the last days, someone compiled a graph from Flight Radar. And you'll see here a huge number of US military transport planes, according to Flight Radar 24, going from Northern Europe, Britain, down to West Asia. They're going through Greek airspace. And if you pay careful attention, you'll see that a lot of them are stopping in Crete, where presumably they're refueling or they're loading. That's down in the Eastern Mediterranean, obviously. So this is just one piece of evidence about the role that Greece is playing. Greece has also, and this is a matter of public record, allowed the Israeli Air Force to use Greek airspace to practice bombing runs on Iran. That was a couple of years ago. And then on top of that, we have statements like this coming from Naftali Bennet.

Naftali Bennet: I want to be very clear. Turkey and Qatar have gained influence in Syria, are seeking influence elsewhere and everywhere throughout the region. And from here, I warn: Turkey is the new Iran. Erdogan is sophisticated, dangerous, and he seeks to encircle Israel. And while some senior Israelis were on Qatar's payroll, Qatar and Turkey are nourishing the Islamic Brotherhood monster that is growing and eventually might become as dangerous as the one created by Iran. Turkey and Qatar are gaining influence not only in Syria, but also in Gaza, through the front door, and everywhere, and trying to create a new choke ring. Turkey is trying to flip Saudi Arabia against us and establish a hostile Sunni axis with nuclear Pakistan.

DL: So, all of this has provoked a strong response from the Turkish foreign minister. Last week, Hakan Fidan criticized Greece and Cyprus over their cooperation with Israel, warning it could heighten regional tensions. And he said, "Cooperation between Greece, the Greek

Cypriot administration, and Israel does not bring more trust, it brings more mistrust, it brings more problems and war". And he added that "Athens is pursuing an extremely dangerous policy". Quote: "There are very interesting aspects in Greece's attempt to pursue a kind of policy that no other country in Europe follows alone".

So this is a bit of a delicate subject for me to address, Pepe, because I am in Greece and while there is a popular opposition to Israel and massive discontent with its crimes against the Palestinian people, the fact is that there is a significant percentage of the Greek population that believes that Turkey is a major threat and that our best protection – when I say "our", I mean the Greek people – is to align ourselves with Israel. And there's a significant percentage of the Cypriot population ascribing to that view as well, even though I think most Cypriots are very appalled by what Israel has done to the Palestinian people. And so from your perspective as someone sitting on the outside – I guess I have a couple of questions for you – first of all: How much of this rhetoric that you hear going back and forth between Turkey and Israel is theater and how much of it do you think is serious? Do you think they actually do regard each other as a major threat to their own security or are they more or less cooperating behind the scenes and just putting on a show for their own electorates?

PE: Okay, after I say something, I'd like to ask you directly, how do you see Greece profiting from this alliance with Israel? Is it parallel to the Modi-Israeli alliance? Like, Modi expects to get military technology, surveillance technology, etc. Is this what Greece is aiming at? But, okay, from the point of view of a nomad outsider, we all know that there's only one Zionist project, which is to pit everybody against everybody else – Arabs, Sunnis, Shiites, Persians, Turks, Kurds – fighting each other to kingdom come, literally, to the profit of Eretz Israel expanding their borders. There's no other Plan B for them. So obviously they need to create or recreate or invent enemies non-stop. So they are already thinking about the next enemy. And apparently it's already designated. It's Turkey.

Considering how monolithic and monochromatic their strategic thinking is, that's not anything that we should be... The problem is, are they throwing Greece into this mix without even asking the people who actually run Greece if this is for Greek interests? I think this is the key question. And that's my question for you, in fact. I don't see Greece profiting from this association. I don't see anything for Greece out of it. Especially because Turkey and Greece, it's something that can be negotiated. There are rational actors on both sides, which is not the case when it comes to Israel and the axis of resistance in West Asia. One is a completely irrational actor and the other ones are rational. In the case of Greece and Turkey, they're both rational actors.

In terms of Turkish public opinion – I am sorry that I have not been to Greece lately. I am a pre-Socratic, just to give you an idea. I grew up with Greek philosophy in my head. So obviously, I was instantly attracted to Greek culture since I was a teenager already. But the vagaries of geopolitics take me to Istanbul. I even lived there for a few months during the beginning of the dönüşüm. I don't see Turkish public opinion seeing Greece antagonistically. You don't feel that when you are in Turkey. And even talking to some Turkish officials –

okay, outside of the AKP, please. For instance, when you talk to Kemalists in Istanbul, absolutely nothing against Turkey [Greece], on the contrary, because they value Greece on a high cultural level. So this is a thing that maybe includes certain specific things or the Greek ruling classes. And this would be my question to you. Is this a trick in the end?

DL: So that's an excellent question, Pepe. Let me start by saying, and I know this is always treacherous waters for a Greek to wade into.

PE: Of course, no, no. Please, be careful. Be careful.

DL: That's not my inclination, but I nonetheless do this with some trepidation because it is a sensitive subject. Obviously with the Ottoman Empire having occupied Greece for so long, that left a bitter taste in the mouths of many, many Greeks, and understandably so. But I don't believe it, and I've had plenty of interactions with Turks in the past few years – and in fact, one of the people who went on my trip to Iran was a Turkish journalist, a wonderful young man, and we got along fabulously. And so all my interactions with ordinary Turks have been positive. I never felt that they were hostile towards me. I hope that they were kind of worried that I might be hostile towards them because I was a Greek. But they never showed any discourtesy to me when they learned that I was Greek.

I think that what happens is the Greek government hypes the threat from Turkey in order to justify absurd levels of military spending. And a lot of that has to do with corruption. There's a lot of corruption in the military industrial complex in Greece. The oligarchy profits enormously from this. The oligarchic profits enormously from doing business with Israel, not just in the military sector, but also a recent report came out which showed that Greek shippers have been providing covertly a lot of oil, gas, and coal, and military equipment to Israel during the genocide, and the Greek oligarchy has tremendous influence over the government. And the government also is highly subservient to Washington, the Greek government, and Washington wants and demands, in fact, that the Greek government facilitate Israel's crimes. So that is also a factor.

And I really feel as a Greek that we are being taken to the cleaners here. I think that what Israel is trying to do is trying to use us as proxies in potentially some kind of military conflict in the future with Turkey. And you can be damn sure that if that happens, that conflict is going to be fought principally on Cypriot and Greek soil, not on Israel's soil. So I'm curious about your thoughts of all of that. That's what I feel is happening here. And my final sort of exhortation to my fellow Greeks is: Stop drinking the Kool-Aid! There's absolutely no reason why we can't get along with our Turkish brothers and sisters. I mean, if you can't bring yourself to side with Turkey in some kind of a conflict with Israel, fine. But the last thing we should do is side with Israel in any conflict.

PE: Absolutely.

DL: So if you have anything to add to that?

PE: You answered the question, Dimitri – hitting the nail on the head is how Israel always plays divide and rule. And once again, they are playing divide and rule, using both Turkey and Greece. And public opinion in Greece and in Turkey, they have to be very, very careful about that because they will start playing Israel's game sooner or later. They cannot do this thing in Iran or in Lebanon. In fact, in Lebanon they do it because in Lebanon they provoke civil war inside Lebanon. This is what they're doing. They're basically supporting a government of traitors in Beirut against Hezbollah. So it's the only thing that they know how to do apart from killing women and children. That's it.

DL: Precisely, precisely brother. Thank you so much. It's been a great pleasure speaking with you.

PE: Thank you, Dimitri, an enormous pleasure.

DL: I hope we can have you on again soon and tap your brain for any number of other pearls of wisdom.

PE: Yes, after China. When I'm in China or leave China, I'm going to have some juicy things to tell you.

DL: Take care. Peace out.

PE: Okay. Yes, peace! Bye.

DL: Cheers. Thank you. Bye-bye.

END

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