

Understanding Iran with Rod Martin

The recent escalation of U.S. military action against Iran marks a significant moment in a conflict that has been unfolding for decades. While immediate headlines focus on airstrikes, energy prices, and geopolitical tension, the underlying dynamics extend far beyond a single military operation. The confrontation touches on longstanding ideological conflict, the stability of the Middle East, the global energy system, and the strategic competition among major world powers. Iran's ruling regime has maintained hostility toward the United States and its allies since the 1979 revolution. Over the years, that conflict has taken the form of proxy warfare, economic sanctions, nuclear development, and periodic military confrontations. The recent strikes on Iranian nuclear infrastructure and leadership targets represent a dramatic escalation in that ongoing struggle.



At the same time, these actions appear to be part of a broader geopolitical strategy. The objective is not simply to weaken Iran militarily, but to reshape regional dynamics, reduce the influence of militant proxy networks, and potentially disrupt the economic advantages enjoyed by strategic competitors such as China. Understanding these developments requires examining three interconnected themes: the nature of the Iranian regime and the conflict surrounding it, the possibility of political transformation inside Iran without a large-scale invasion, and the broader geopolitical and economic consequences of these events.



In this briefing we will discuss the following:

- » Escalation of the U.S.–Iran Conflict and the Nature of the Iranian Regime
- » The Prospect of Regime Change Without a U.S. Invasion
- » Global Geopolitical and Economic Implications

YOUR MISSION: Gain insight into U.S. strategic actions against Iran so you can better understand how they may contribute to a freer Middle East, reduced global terrorism, and potential economic advantages for America by weakening key adversaries.

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WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

- » Events in the Middle East influence global energy markets, financial stability, and national security policy. Military escalation can quickly translate into market volatility, supply disruptions, and higher everyday costs, including fuel and goods.
- » As an American, this conflict can affect national safety through the risk of proxy attacks, higher military spending, and economic instability that may place added pressure on taxpayers and local communities.
- » Understanding the ideological motivations and strategic behavior of Iran's regime helps explain why policymakers view it as a unique threat and why preventing nuclear proliferation remains a matter of long-term security.
- » The prospect of regime change matters because a successful internal transition could reduce the likelihood of prolonged U.S. military involvement abroad and lessen the strain that extended conflicts place on domestic priorities.
- » Grasping the broader geopolitical and economic implications can help you better interpret world events, understand shifts in energy markets and alliances, and recognize how these developments may affect American growth and prosperity.

Ep. 10-389 (OSINT) Open-Sourced Intelligence Report. This briefing includes a conversation between Kevin Freeman and Rod Martin. Rod is a friend of the Economic War Room® and an American Patriot.

Rod D. Martin, Founder and CEO of Martin Capital, is a technology entrepreneur, investor, and futurist from Destin, Florida. Fox Business calls him a "tech guru," Gawker once labeled him a "brilliant nonconformist," while Britain's Guardian describes him as a "philosopher capitalist." BlazeTV has named him "one of America's leading public intellectuals."

Rod was part of PayPal's pre-IPO startup team, serving as special counsel to founder and CEO Peter Thiel, and also served as policy director to former Governor Mike Huckabee. He is active in a variety of charitable and educational endeavors, including service on the Board of Directors of the Center for Security Policy, on the Board of Advisors at the Liberty University School of Business, and as co-founder of the Conservative Baptist Network. He previously served as an officer of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant denomination. He is an internationally sought-after speaker, author, strategist, and investor.



1. Escalation of the U.S.–Iran Conflict and the Nature of the Iranian Regime

The confrontation between the United States and Iran did not begin with recent military strikes. It traces back to 1979, when Iranian revolutionaries stormed the American embassy in Tehran and held 53 Americans hostage for 444 days. That moment marked the beginning of a long-running conflict that has shaped Middle Eastern geopolitics for nearly half a century.



Since then, Iran's ruling regime has repeatedly supported militant proxy groups across the region, supplied weapons to militias targeting American forces, and pursued nuclear capabilities while openly declaring hostility toward the United States and Israel. Over the decades, attacks linked to Iranian proxies—from the Beirut barracks bombing to improvised explosive devices used against U.S. troops in Iraq—have reinforced the reality that the conflict has been ongoing, whether formally acknowledged or not.

“For my entire adult life, the nation of Iran has been at war with the United States, whether we acknowledged it or not... Iran has repeatedly been named the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism. They or their proxies have bombed American barracks and carried out all sorts of mischief.” –Kevin Freeman

Understanding the nature of the regime itself is critical. Iran's political leadership is rooted in a radical strain of Shiite Islam known as Twelver Shiism, which holds that a hidden messianic figure—the Mahdi—will one day return to establish justice on earth. Critics argue that some factions within Iran's leadership believe global chaos could hasten that return.

This worldview complicates traditional deterrence strategies. During the Cold War, Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) prevented nuclear war between superpowers because both sides sought survival. But a regime that glorifies martyrdom or apocalyptic confrontation may not respond to the same logic.

“They are called Twelvers. They are part of a relatively small group of Shiite Muslims who believe not only that the Messiah will come back. The difference is that Baptists and Methodists don't think they need to cause that to happen. And the Iranian regime believes not only do they have to cause it to happen, but that the mechanism of action is basically a rain of nuclear fire. Burn down the world and the Mahdi will return. So, these are not people who can be deterred with normal mutual assured destruction strategies... These are people who, if they have it, they're going to use it. And if that's a suicide run, they're actually happy about it.” –Rod Martin

Externally, the regime has fueled conflicts across the Middle East through funding and arming proxy groups in Lebanon, Gaza, Yemen, and Iraq. Internally, it maintains strict enforcement of Sharia law—a comprehensive system of Islamic legal governance that regulates political authority, social behavior, and criminal justice.



The consequences have been severe. Human rights groups have documented executions for political dissent and harsh punishments under religious law. Economically, heavy state control and sanctions have contributed to stagnation, leaving many Iranians frustrated with the ruling clerical elite.

Despite the regime's control, signs of dissatisfaction inside Iran have grown in recent years. Reports indicate declining mosque attendance, rising interest in alternative religious traditions, and waves of public protests against the government. In some cases, videos circulating online have even shown Iranians expressing support for strikes against regime targets.

These dynamics illustrate a key distinction often overlooked in Western analysis: the Iranian people and the Iranian regime are not the same. While the leadership maintains power through force and ideological control, large segments of the population appear increasingly disillusioned with the system imposed after the 1979 revolution.

This broader context explains why tensions with Iran have persisted across multiple U.S. administrations and why diplomatic efforts alone have repeatedly failed to resolve the conflict. The current escalation is not an isolated event but the latest chapter in a strategic struggle that has lasted for decades.



Attention: The confrontation with Iran reflects a decades-long ideological and strategic conflict that continues to shape global security and the balance of power in the Middle East.

2. The Prospect of Regime Change Without a U.S. Invasion

If the first question is why the conflict with Iran continues, the next question is even more consequential: Can the regime actually fall without a full-scale U.S. invasion?

Historically, regime change has often meant large troop deployments and prolonged occupations. The Iraq War stands as the most recent example, where hundreds of thousands of U.S. forces were required to remove Saddam Hussein and stabilize the country afterward. That model proved costly, politically divisive, and difficult to sustain.



The current strategy being discussed represents a different approach. Rather than sending massive ground forces into Iran, the focus is on degrading the regime's ability to maintain control—targeting key leadership structures, military command networks, and security forces that enforce the regime's authority.

Modern military technology has made this approach increasingly feasible. Precision drone strikes, intelligence-driven targeting, and highly specialized military capabilities allow operations against specific regime assets without the need for widespread invasion.

For example, targeted strikes have reportedly focused on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard

Corps (IRGC)—the elite military organization tasked with protecting the Iranian regime and suppressing internal opposition. The IRGC operates as both a military force and a political power center inside Iran, controlling large portions of the economy and security apparatus.

In addition to precision strikes, this strategy may involve Special Operations Forces (SpecOps)—elite units trained for covert missions such as intelligence gathering, sabotage, and limited strategic operations. These forces operate in small numbers but can have outsized strategic impact.



“You actually have to destroy the centers of power of the regime to make it possible for the disarmed populace to be able to rise successfully and overthrow their government... That’s happening now. We’re seeing widespread destruction of IRGC forces and bases and leadership compounds throughout the regime... If we can just degrade the regime sufficiently, the

people will rise... I believe they will rise in response to the call from Reza Pahlavi, the crown prince.” –Rod Martin

This model also avoids the long-term nation-building challenges that plagued earlier interventions. Limited operations—potentially including special operations missions to secure strategic locations such as Kharg Island, a major Iranian oil export terminal—could support the broader goal without triggering a prolonged occupation.

In effect, the objective is not to impose political change from outside but to remove the barriers preventing it from emerging within Iran itself.



Attention: Targeted pressure on the regime’s security structure may create the conditions for internal political change—without requiring a large-scale American invasion.

3. Global Geopolitical and Economic Implications

The consequences of the confrontation with Iran extend far beyond the Middle East. At its core, the conflict intersects with global geopolitics, energy markets, and the strategic competition among major powers.

For decades, Iran has played a central role in destabilizing the region through its support of proxy organizations across Lebanon, Gaza, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria. Groups such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis have received funding, weapons, and training from Tehran, enabling conflicts that repeatedly threaten regional stability and global shipping routes.

Removing or weakening the Iranian regime would therefore have implications far beyond Iran's borders. Without Iranian funding and coordination, many of these proxy networks would lose their primary source of support, dramatically reshaping the strategic landscape of the Middle East.

“Iran is the source of every ongoing armed conflict in region. There's not an exception. I mean, if you're talking about Gaza, if you're talking about Lebanon, if you're talking about Yemen and the Red Sea, if you're talking about anything anywhere that threatens these countries, it is armed, directed, and funded from Tehran.” –Rod Martin



One of the most visible examples of Iran's influence can be seen in attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and surrounding waterways. The Strait of Hormuz—a narrow maritime passage between Iran and Oman—serves as a chokepoint through which roughly 20 percent of the world's oil supply flows. Disruptions in this corridor can rapidly affect global energy prices and economic stability.

This is where the conflict intersects with a broader geopolitical competition.

Energy markets are not only an economic issue; they are also a strategic one. Iran is among the world's largest oil producers, and its energy exports have played an important role in sustaining sanctioned economies and geopolitical alliances.

China, in particular, has relied heavily on discounted oil from countries under Western sanctions, including Iran, Venezuela, and Russia. Much of this oil moves through a so-called "shadow fleet" of tankers operating outside traditional compliance channels.

"You take Venezuela offline. You take Iran offline. You disrupt the shadow fleet in a way that takes Russia partly offline. All of that goes straight to the current massive geopolitical threat, China, because China actually imports between 40 and 50 percent of its oil from those three sources." –Rod Martin



If those supply channels are disrupted—whether through sanctions enforcement, interdiction of illicit tankers, or political changes within producer states—China may be forced to purchase more oil on open markets at higher prices. That shift could significantly alter global economic dynamics.

At the same time, political change in Iran could unlock new regional opportunities. Many Middle Eastern governments—including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Bahrain—have already normalized relations with Israel through the Abraham Accords, a series of diplomatic agreements first signed in 2020.



A post-regime Iran could potentially transform the region's alignment even further. Historically, Iran maintained cooperative relationships with both Israel and the West before the 1979 revolution. If a future government were to return to that posture, the Middle East could move toward broader economic integration and regional stability.

In addition, increased oil production from Iran and Venezuela—if sanctions were lifted following political change—could expand global supply and potentially drive energy prices lower over the long term.

Short-term volatility is still possible. Energy markets often react quickly to geopolitical events, and disruptions can cause temporary spikes in gasoline prices or financial market turbulence. However, institutions such as the International Energy Agency (IEA) have tools to stabilize markets, including strategic petroleum reserve releases.

Ultimately, the strategic implications of the Iran conflict are global. What happens in Tehran could influence everything from energy markets and trade routes to the balance of power among major nations.



Attention: The confrontation with Iran is not only a regional conflict—it is part of a broader geopolitical strategy shaping global energy markets, international alliances, and the long-term balance of economic power.



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2. **Learn more about the work of USFutures.org, a think tank focused on national security, geopolitical strategy, and the future of American leadership in a rapidly changing world.**
3. **Study the historical context**
Review the major events in U.S.–Iran relations since 1979 to better understand the geopolitical dynamics driving today's conflict.
4. **Monitor global energy developments**
Follow oil market trends, particularly developments involving the Strait of Hormuz and Middle Eastern production.
5. **Understand key geopolitical terms**
Familiarize yourself with concepts such as sanctions, proxy warfare, regime change, and strategic chokepoints to interpret international developments more effectively.
6. **Track political developments inside Iran**
Watch for signs of internal change, including protests, leadership shifts, or changes in public sentiment toward the ruling regime.
7. **Evaluate broader strategic trends**
Consider how developments in the Middle East intersect with global competition among major powers such as the United States, China, and Russia.
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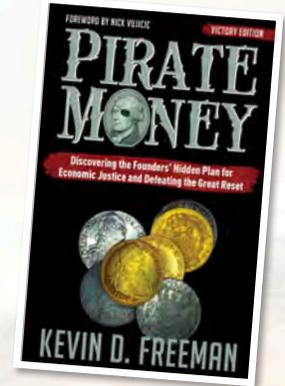
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If we can just degrade the regime sufficiently, the people will rise. I believe they will rise in response to the call from Reza Pahlavi.”

–Rod Marin, Founder, RodMartin.org & USfutures.org

“For my entire adult life, the nation of Iran has been at war with the United States, whether we acknowledged it or not.”

–Kevin Freeman, CFA & Host Pirate Money Radio

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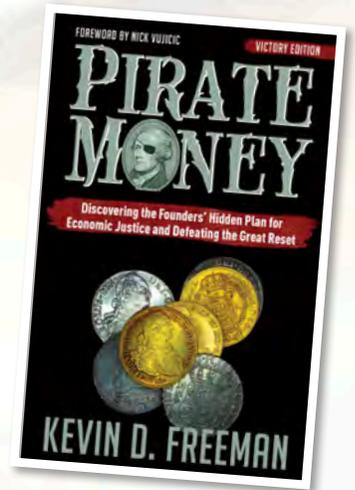
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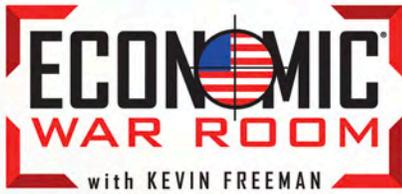
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