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[#WorldPolitics](#) [#Media](#)

TDS Is Alive and Well: Trump Derangement Syndrome. One could be excused for thinking it is more contagious than Covid. Worse, there is no vaccine on offer, not even an untested one. Like the Covid variants, Trump Derangement Syndrome affects people in different ways. Some of the symptoms people have experienced, notably in their verbosity, are truly laughable.

It will come as no surprise to those of us who have managed to keep our sanity that the left-wing media is leading the way in creating this maelstrom of public opinion. Well almost, because it would seem the right-wing, normally balanced, Daily Express in the United Kingdom has also become infected, but the reason for this is unclear. A lot of what the media is writing and saying under the guise of TDS is truly nonsensical and much of it beggars belief.

We should not be surprised. In fact Trump Derangement Syndrome was alive and well during his first presidency. Being new to the job in 2016 he took advice on whom to take advice from. This was a learning curve, as a number of turncoats ended up being appointed and his first presidency was not as successful as it might otherwise have been. Following his ousting in the rigged 2020 election he was hounded into court on numerous occasions by the Democrats on spurious trumped (pardon the pun) up charges. The left's raison d'être is to play the man and not the ball.

During this presidency he has applied the lessons learnt and hand-picked his cabinet who, on the whole, have performed well. A couple have been on the end of his well known phrase from his television days – YOU'RE FIRED – but overall it's working well. The media, of course, are predicting half the cabinet suffering the same fate but that is not likely. Any chance to cause mischief and the lefty media outlets are the first cabs off the ranks.

They, along with their friends in the deranged Democrat Party live, eat and breathe Trump Derangement Syndrome and don't appear to realise what absolute fools they are making of themselves in the process. They spot a bruise on his hand and they are practically on the 'phone to the undertakers. Four

articles down they print one showing him alive and well. Trump and I were born in the same year, 1946, and we sport the same bruises. It's part of the ageing process.

He has an expletive rant and we are told that he's demented. Three articles on and the article they print shows a perfectly sane president. Do they actually expect people to believe the garbage they write? You'd have to be a sandwich short of a picnic to believe any of it. The same applies here at home when it comes to One and Three News. They source all their overseas news from their TDS friends in America and the UK.

Then we get to the politicians, the same ones, mostly from the left but also including Luxon, Willis and Bishop, who promote issues like climate change and international law. I caught an item from Three News (it was on YouTube) from Luxon's press conference where he was talking about the Iran operation. It was a pathetic watch. Mercifully it was only one minute and 24 seconds long. There he was, this little bald-headed gentleman, standing at the podium calling for a de-escalation in the rhetoric (no doubt a reference to Trump's foul-mouthed rant) and the military action. The White House says the rhetoric aided in getting a ceasefire. I agree; however, he might have achieved the same outcome minus the unbecoming foul language.

Luxon said a de-escalation would be in New Zealand's interests. No thought for the poor people of Iran being shot in the streets and what might be in their interests. Just another example of the political correctness and wokeness that pervades political leaders of his generation. He should know that Trump is working day and night to get a resolution so as to stop the military action. Where Trump and Luxon part ways is Trump will never allow Iran to develop nuclear weapons under any circumstances and to that end he will do whatever it takes to make sure that goal is achieved. That is his top priority ahead of even regime change. This type of strategy is known as 'peace through strength'.

According to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Iran has already tested an ICBM capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and reaching London or Paris despite denying possession of such a weapon. The ultimate objective is to build one to reach the American mainland and if Trump hadn't taken the action he has, that would have at some point come to fruition. Trump is not nearly as naïve as

Luxon's generation, born long after the end of WWII. If Luxon is serious about de-escalation he needs to get on the blower and talk to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps rather than concern himself with Trump's rhetoric. If he did that he would find out where the responsibility really lies.

Here's the real problem – people don't understand Trump. They don't want to understand Trump. They see him as this huge ego-driven bombastic unlikeable idiot causing mayhem around the world. Ego driven and bombastic certainly, but an idiot? Far from it. Trump, like many on this site, knows the dangers the world is facing and knows these dangers must be dealt with. This man is no sleepy Joe Biden being manipulated by mandarins in back offices. He is maligned for saying he would not start wars but has supposedly done so with Iran. Wrong. He is defending America against an enemy that has so far killed up to a thousand American soldiers and many more others.

Now a ceasefire has been reached for two weeks and the Strait of Hormuz will reopen. How has this been achieved? Certainly not by standing at a podium mumbling about de-escalation. It has been achieved through Trump issuing threats in a manner that leaves no doubt as to what his intentions are and that they will be carried out. This is Trump's modus operandi. Only by threatening to take Greenland was NATO forced off the couch and into a position of active participation to guard against Chinese and Russian threats. With a similar strategy he has brought Iran to heel.

With previous presidents like Biden and Obama, Iran could easily call the tune, buy time, extract money and simply string them along. Not so with Trump. If they don't accede to the cessation of building nuclear weapons then the consequences will be dire. The gloves are off. Whether there is regime change remains to be seen, but one thing is clear: Iran's ability to have nuclear weapons will have been set back at least five decades or more and for that the world owes Trump a debt of gratitude. Trump's rhetoric left Iran having to choose between the continuing of civilisation or complete obliteration. In a rare moment of sensibility they chose the former.

For a man of his age his workload is immense and his stamina is at least on a par with his ego. Yet, the media paint him as a bad man at every opportunity. He's accused of genocide and not behaving according to international law, but

do you ever hear the media accuse the aggressors of such things? No. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard slaughter 40,000 of their own in the streets without a murmur from the leftist media about genocide or international law. Trump will offer Iran a Venezuelan-type deal when it comes to the future of their oil, whereby both countries will benefit.

The two-week ceasefire is an opportunity for the Iranian leadership to do the right thing. It is very much in their interest to do so. The military operation will then cease and the oil will flow. Any other option they choose puts them on a path of certain destruction from which they will take a long time to recover. If there is a continuation of the military operation the responsibility for that will rest entirely with the Iranian despots and nobody else. How will the media portray it? As they did with Israel and Hamas, they will take the side of the aggressors. Most likely the media will inevitably catch a case of 'long Trump Derangement Syndrome'. Good luck with that.

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[#WorldPolitics](#) The Strait of Hormuz, Trump, and the End of Pretend Peace: Ani O'Brien

Like good faith disagreements and principled people. Dislike disingenuousness and Foucault. Care especially about women's rights, justice, and democracy.

The world held its breath. The Leader of the "Free World" had threatened that "a whole civilisation will die tonight" and everyone seemed to take this very literally. And understandably so! This kind of rhetoric is not something we are used to from Western leaders. In the West we do diplomacy and handshakes and express disapproval. Well, we have in the years since the world wars (with a few notable exceptions).

Before going any further, it is worth being clear about what has actually happened...

The Strait of Hormuz is the narrow maritime corridor through which roughly a fifth of the world's oil flows and it has been effectively choked by Iran causing the current fuel crisis. Now, following Donald Trump's escalating rhetoric, a fragile two week ceasefire has been announced, shipping is to resume, and we will all watch oil prices hoping they retreat quickly.

This is a very fragile, tentative de-escalation. A precarious and temporary release of pressure allowing for more time for Trump to strong arm the Iranian regime into submission and for them to attempt to wriggle out of it. It is not a win, but it is a reprieve, and it remains to be seen if it is a step toward whatever comes next. Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The well to-do middle classes and establishment elite all over the West are horrified by the language President Trump uses, the warrior gung-ho schtick of his Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, and the wholesale rejection of globalism. A visceral reaction to this is natural as it runs counter to the culture of (the pretence of) peace that we have grown up with. But that peace, if it ever truly

existed, is gone now. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth (Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

The West has been sleepwalking toward its own demise. China's rapid economic dominance has gone unchallenged and the spread of Islamist ideology and terror has been largely accepted as some kind of tax on living in diverse societies. Authoritarians, dictators, and despots have been unafraid of the West and global bodies and so have acted confidently to expand their interests. Russia has invaded Ukraine, Iranian proxies have attacked Israel, and China has advanced its dominance in the South China Sea and Pacific.

Anti-interventionists might say "so what? They can do their anti-liberal, authoritarian thing over there and we will have liberal democracy over here." But apart from domestic policy having allowed anti-liberal and anti-West ideologies to embed in the West itself, one only needs to listen to what our adversaries say openly to understand that staying in our own lanes is not an option. A simple search of speeches by the leaders of these regimes will turn up example after example of cries for the death of America and the West. They are explicit in their intentions for world dominance.

With all of our liberal tolerance and 'can't we all get along' attitude, we are headed toward civilisational suicide. We will be rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic when the ship goes down. We can't all get along because the other side is willing to martyr themselves to take us out.

The West needs a reality check. War is at our door whether we like it or not. It is not necessarily a war over territory (although in some places it is), it is the ultimate culture war. A war over ideology and religion. For non-religious Westerners it might feel like they have no skin in the game, but living under Christianity with its claws removed is very different to Islamist rule. This is about our liberal, tolerant way of life being superseded with a belief system that subjugates women, slaughters homosexuals, and promotes sectarian violence.

If you pearl clutch about the abortion law changes in the US that are largely not happening anyway, it is inconceivable to be unworried about the much larger threat to women's autonomy globally. Try protesting about women's rights in Iran, Syria, or Afghanistan and see what happens.

A combination of naivety, distance from the wars against fascism of the 20th century, and generations of anti-Western indoctrination have resulted in apathetic populations who are not only unwilling to defend our freedoms, but cannot even comprehend that they are worth fighting for. Winston Churchill must be turning in his grave watching Britain right now.

Yes, war is brutal, expensive, messy, and should be avoided. But not having the stomach for war will not prevent it coming. China, Russia, Iran... they have ignored the West's words. Our global bodies have been so weak as to give them spots on peace councils and committees. Make no mistake: the reason China has not swept through the South Seas, Iran hasn't dropped nukes on everyone, and Russia hasn't captured all of Eastern Europe is not because we have negotiated nicely with them. It is because the threat of America's military might has stood behind those conversations.

Westerners have tricked ourselves into thinking we live in times of dignified peace and diplomacy, but without violence none of it would have held. Throughout the entirety of our history as a species it has always been violence and the threat of violence that has been the ultimate currency. That is why anti-Americanism and derision of their military by the educated classes here and elsewhere in the West are such an insult. Like trustfund nepo babies who live off mummy and daddy and then play pretend communist for a while. Our freedoms have depended on American guns this whole time. It is an unpalatable truth.

This does not mean we cannot criticise America and Donald Trump, or Barack Obama, or whoever comes next. But American frustration with Europe has been building for years, and it is now being expressed with increasing bluntness. From Barack Obama warning of "free riders" within NATO, to Donald Trump openly castigating allies for failing to meet defence spending

commitments, to Joe Biden urging burden-sharing, successive presidents have warned that European states are failing to meet their defence obligations, allowing their military capabilities to erode while relying on the United States to guarantee their security. They were ignored and now much of Europe is in the awkward situation of wanting to oppose what Trump is doing while being reluctantly aware of how reliant they are on his country. The lesson is (and we are learning this on multiple fronts at the moment) that nation states must ensure their own sovereignty as much as possible.

Of course, scale plays a role in how independent a state can be. New Zealand will always need to rely on bigger, wealthier, better militarily resourced countries to an extent. But (not-so-)Great Britain and much of Europe have learned a harsh lesson. They have allowed their militaries to be underfunded and dysfunctional. Had they not effectively disarmed they could actually engage in discussions with the US about strategy for dealing with common threats, but as lame ducks they don't really have a leg to stand on. From Washington's perspective, this is not simply a matter of fairness. It is a question of credibility. An alliance in which one member consistently carries the burden is inherently unstable. The current crisis has sharpened that perception, revealing a Europe that can call for de-escalation but lacks the capacity to enforce it.

Nowhere are these failures more visible than in Iran.

It is important to understand, as I outlined above, that this is not simply another regional flare-up centred on Iran. The immediate conflict has roots in years of shadow warfare between Iran and Israel, proxy terrorist militias, cyber operations, and targeted strikes that, until recently, stopped short of direct confrontation.

The threshold was crossed on October the 7th 2023 and then escalated when US and Israeli forces engaged in strikes a matter of weeks ago. They have moved beyond military targets into critical infrastructure, degrading Iran's economic capacity as well as its strategic position. Reports indicate widespread

disruption to industrial production, including severe damage to steel output and transport networks.

At the centre of this escalation sits the failure of the West to prevent the collapse of any durable framework for managing Iran's nuclear ambitions. Iran's nuclear program, once constrained by the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has advanced significantly since the United States withdrew from the agreement in 2018. Under the deal negotiated by Barack Obama, Iran agreed to strict limits on uranium enrichment, international inspections, and caps on its nuclear stockpile in exchange for sanctions relief. At the time, the agreement was presented as a diplomatic breakthrough that would prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon while avoiding another destabilising war in the Middle East.

But there was a flaw in Obama's approach in that it prioritised temporary restraint over permanent resolution, embedding sunset clauses that effectively legitimised Iran's long-term nuclear ambitions rather than eliminating them. Additionally, as part of the deal Iran received access to tens of billions of dollars in unfrozen assets and sanctions relief, injecting substantial resources back into a regime that continued to fund regional proxy terror groups and expand its influence across Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. The US administration framed this as a pragmatic compromise. In reality, it amounted to a high-stakes gamble that economic integration would moderate Iran's behaviour.

That gamble did not pay off. Even within the framework of the JCPOA, Iran continued to test the boundaries of compliance while advancing its missile programme and entrenching its regional footprint. The deal constrained one dimension of Iran's power while enabling others. The result was not a stable equilibrium, but a delayed confrontation.

Even Hillary Clinton expressed misgivings on the Iran deal. She publicly defended it and even intervened at key moments to protect the diplomatic process, warning that additional sanctions could fracture the international coalition that had been painstakingly built and weaken pressure on Tehran. But

her support came with a clear-eyed scepticism that set her apart from the more optimistic framing of the Obama administration.

In a major policy speech, Clinton cautioned that the Iran agreement “isn’t the start of some larger diplomatic opening” and should not be expected to fundamentally change Iran’s behaviour, adopting the deliberately blunt doctrine of “distrust and verify”. Where Obama tended to isolate the nuclear issue and treat the deal as a stabilising breakthrough, Clinton framed Iran as a persistent strategic adversary that would continue to sponsor proxies, challenge regional order, and require sustained military, economic, and diplomatic pressure. In this, her assessment of Iran has more in common with Donald Trump’s although their approach differs. Chuck Schumer, John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and the Brookings Institute have also conveyed similar understandings of the situation. It could be considered the mainstream bipartisan strategic consensus.

It was understanding of the fragility and volatility of the situation that informed the decision by Donald Trump to withdraw from the agreement in 2018. The Trump administration argued that the JCPOA was fundamentally flawed, too narrow in scope, too lenient in its enforcement, and incapable of preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear state. Withdrawal was framed as a rejection of the broader philosophy that had produced the deal. In its place came a strategy of “maximum pressure” by reimposing sanctions, isolating Iran economically, and attempting to force a renegotiation on far more restrictive terms.

His recent statements in which he threatens to dismantle Iran’s infrastructure and warns of consequences severe enough to cripple the country are not aberrations in this sense. They are consistent with a world view that prioritises coercion over negotiation. The two-week ceasefire is not the product of careful diplomacy or mutual concession, but of an ultimatum: reopen the “fuckin’ Strait” of Hormuz or face escalation. That it succeeded in the immediate term does not prove that it will succeed in the long term, but it does show that there is some logic to dealing with these adversaries in terms they understand: violence.

But Iran is not the whole story.

The deeper logic of American strategy is clearer when viewed through a wider lens that captures competition with China. The Middle East is critical for global energy flows, and while the United States is less dependent on those flows than it once was, China is not. A significant share of its energy imports passes through the Strait of Hormuz. Disruption there has had immediate consequences for Beijing.

China has been steadily expanding its presence in the region, deepening ties with Gulf states while also extending its influence into Latin America. Venezuela's vast oil reserves and economic dependence created an opening for Chinese investment and leverage while Cuba's proximity to the US gave China intelligence and surveillance opportunities. In the Arctic, Trump's interest in Greenland reflects a recognition of China and Russia's interest in the region as melting ice opens new trade routes and exposes untapped resources. See the bigger picture forming? The media has preferred to report as if America's moves are a matter of isolated, scattergun chaos. But they form part of a broader strategy for managing a network of economic and strategic relationships that challenge American influence across the world.

The US has been creating strategic compression. Pressure in one region cannot be separated from developments in another. America has unleashed an integrated framework that aims to contain Iran, secure energy routes, counter Chinese expansion, and reassert influence in areas that have drifted away from American orbit. This is a unified approach built on leverage, not a series of disconnected policies. It prioritises leverage over stability and immediate outcomes over long-term certainty. It assumes that adversaries can be compelled into submission through sustained economic and military pressure, and that escalation can be carefully managed rather than spiralling beyond control. It assumes this.

The problem is that this strategy operates within a system that is increasingly unwilling or unable to absorb it. The institutions that once mediated conflict, the United Nations, multilateral trade frameworks, and broader diplomatic

structures, have weakened significantly. Trust in these global institutions has been shot to bits. The United Nations rendered itself irrelevant by playing politics in a way that rewarded human rights abusers while punishing or sidelining Western powers. Without global mechanisms, the threat of conflict lacks the buffer it has had in the second half of the 20th century. Conflict is being managed directly through power, and power is being exercised more aggressively.

For decades, American strategy was built on a combination of containment, alliance management, and incremental pressure. Even when flawed, it operated within a framework that prioritised stability and predictability. The current approach represents a clean break from that tradition. Under Donald Trump, the United States is no longer attempting to manage adversaries within a stable system. It is attempting to force outcomes in an unstable one. The shift from deterrence to coercion, from alliances to conditional partnerships, and from containment to confrontation marks a fundamental transformation in how power is exercised.

This new approach can certainly generate pressure, but can it produce sustainable outcomes before that pressure triggers consequences that no one can fully control?

We will have to see if the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and the announcement of a ceasefire will have any lasting impact on the conflict. Because escalation has its limits and sets a trajectory where the only direction left is further escalation.

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[#WorldPolitics](#) While the World Holds Its Breath: Ashley Church

Digital creator

On Friday I took part in a regular panel podcast where, among other things, we discussed the rapidly shifting situation in the Middle East, the fragile ceasefire now in place between the US and Iran, and the peace talks that have begun in Islamabad.

We also touched on the growing gap between those negotiations and some of the statements coming out of the White House. My own position was to question whether this confusion was part of a deliberate strategy – as it clearly was in the first phase of this campaign – or whether Trump was simply now out of his depth. The latter suggestion prompted a strong reaction from Trump supporters whose instinct is to attack anyone who questions Trump's actions in any way.

To be fair, I have some sympathy for their response – particularly in relation to this matter. Trump was willing to do what most Western leaders were not. He acted on an issue that others have talked about, for decades, but have been unwilling to address. The United States, alongside Israel, took direct military action against a brutal Islamic regime, which has imprisoned 90 million Iranians for almost 50 years while other nations – my own included – wrung their cowardly hands and tut-tutted at the actions of the US and Israel rather than showing the support that the situation demands.

Trump's supporters are also right to be frustrated with a mainstream media which seems to be wholly incapable of giving him credit for anything – and this helps to explain why so many of those supporters have become reflexively defensive whenever criticism of him is raised.

But there is a middle position. You can acknowledge what Trump has done right, while still asking whether what he is doing now makes sense. Because this is not some minor political argument. What happens next affects the future of Iran, the stability of the Middle East, the security of Israel, and fuel prices around the world. As such, scrutiny is not only reasonable – it is essential.

Which brings us to the real question: what exactly IS happening now?

Looking at the current situation, there seem to be three possibilities.

The first is that Trump is again using confusion as a tactic. That the contradictory signals, the inflated language, the erratic public messaging, and the strange negotiation noise are all part of a deliberate strategy to keep Iran, the media and the wider world off balance while the US and Israel prepare for a second phase. If that's the case – all power to them.

The second possibility is that Trump has not been playing chess at all – but is, instead, trying to make the best of a bad position. That would mean that the current ceasefire and negotiations are not the prelude to a stronger second phase, but an exit ramp. A way of claiming victory without actually achieving the central objective of the campaign. If this second scenario is right, Trump will emerge claiming that America has won, that Iran has been contained, that peace has been secured, and that a suite of concessions (that would never have been necessary if there had been no war) has been agreed – all while leaving the regime in place. That will not be a triumph – it will be an embarrassing compromise dressed up as a win.

The third possibility is that neither of those explanations is correct, and that Trump simply doesn't know what he is doing right now. That the ceasefire has bought time not for a prepared second phase, but for indecision. Personally, I think this is the least likely explanation. Whatever anyone thinks of Trump, Israel is not strategically naive, militarily weak, or prone to improvising its way into chaos for fun. It is one of the most capable military powers on earth, and it is hard to believe that after executing the opening campaign with such discipline, it would allow itself to be drawn into the next stage of this campaign without an agreed plan.

So, for now, the world watches and waits. The talks are real, the ceasefire is real (for now), the economic pressure is real, and the danger to global energy supplies is real. But the final shape of how it all plays out is not yet clear.

But, perhaps most importantly, 90 million Iranians remain trapped under an Islamic regime that has brutalised its own people, terrorised its neighbours, repeatedly threatened the world, and helped turn one of the most important regions on earth into a permanent powder keg. As such, a face-saving arrangement that leaves the current regime intact is simply not acceptable. If the next phase does not bring about the end of the regime of the Mullahs and the chance for the Iranian people to replace a corrupt Islamist dictatorship with something freer, saner and more humane – then all of this effort has will have been for nothing.

(For the record – I think Trump will leave the current regime in place and will attempt to claim this as a victory. But my reasons for this relate to Bible prophecy and that's a topic for another day.)

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