

How Iran Defeated the US-Israel Regime Change OP | Hugh Miles

How does a "ragtag" opposition manage to smuggle 50,000 Starlink terminals into a heavily sanctioned fortress? The recent chaos in Tehran was not a genuine uprising but a US-Israeli orchestrated regime change operation. Its failure means a whole lot for US hegemony in the region. To deconstruct this fog of war, I sat down with investigative journalist and award-winning author Hugh Miles. As the founder of ArabDigest.org, Hugh has been tracking the pulse of the Middle East for decades, and his latest analysis offers a piercing look at how Tehran survived the onslaught and what this historic failure signals for the collapsing Zionist project. Links: ArabDigest article: <https://arabdigest.org/arab-digest-newsletter/surviving-the-hybrid-war-how-iran-thwarted-a-western-israeli-regime-change-attack/> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch & Donations: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction: Iran Regime Change Attempt 00:00:39 Anatomy of the "Hybrid War" Attack 00:10:19 Social Media Propaganda & Narrative Shaping 00:14:55 Why the Military Coup Failed 00:18:26 Did Trump Sabotage the Neocons? 00:22:20 US Withdrawal from Syria 00:26:15 Future Attacks on Iran & Eastern Alliances 00:29:39 Israel's Situation & The "Board of Peace" 00:33:00 The Strategic Decline of Israel 00:48:51 Conclusion

#Pascal

Welcome back to Neutrality Studies. Today I'm joined by Hugh Miles, an award-winning author and investigative journalist specializing in the Middle East and North Africa. Hugh recently wrote an illuminating article for the online outlet ArabDigest.org. The piece was titled *Surviving the Hybrid War: How Iran Thwarted a Western-Israeli Regime Change Attack.* That's what we want to discuss today. So, Hugh, welcome.

#Hugh Miles

Thank you for having me on the show.

#Pascal

Hugh, this was a very interesting article in which you point out how, on many levels, this was a very coordinated attack on Iran. Can you lay out your interpretation of how this attack unfolded and what the different stages were?

#Hugh Miles

Okay, sure. So, to understand what's happened in Iran over the last few weeks, you really have to look back at what happened last year, in 2025, when Donald Trump said he was going to step up his maximum pressure campaign on Iran. In July, there was the two-week war with Israel, so the situation was already very tense. After that, the economic pressure on Iran increased further. Trump imposed more sanctions on Chinese oil refineries that buy Iranian oil, and this added to the already huge economic strain that had been building for years—ever since the end of the JCPOA, really, and even before that. So the pressure kept mounting, and finally, it all came to a head around New Year.

If you remember, at New Year, Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu met and spent the holiday together. Soon after that, there was a complete collapse of the Iranian rial—it lost about 30 or 40 percent of its value. This was celebrated by American officials as a success of the maximum pressure campaign, and it triggered protests in Iran, as you'd expect. At the beginning of January, the protests were initially peaceful. But after about three days, they suddenly exploded into a rampage of violence. We saw a deluge of videos coming out of Iran showing people fighting, many being killed, people firing machine guns, fighting with machetes, setting fire to mosques—complete chaos across the country.

And at the same time, the Western media began this tsunami of propaganda, if you like, saying that the plucky Iranian pro-democracy demonstrators were being brutalized by the regime and that the West had to do something. So the case for war was being very quickly established, in a way that was really reminiscent of what happened in Germany—if you remember, before the invasion of Iraq, when they talked about Kuwaiti babies being pulled out of incubators, and so on. There was a lot of talk about atrocities and human rights abuses. At the same time, the Western media also reported that there were thousands and thousands of these Starlink terminals. The New York Times said there were 50,000 Starlink terminals in Iran, and that this ragtag group of pro-democracy...

#Pascal

They used that term—"ragtag." It was in the New York Times. A ragtag group, like a loose collective of opposition figures who somehow managed to get 50,000.

#Hugh Miles

Well, I mean, exactly. And clearly, this begs the question—how on earth could ragtag pro-democracy demonstrators get tens of millions of dollars' worth of high-tech equipment into an embargoed, heavily sanctioned country? It doesn't make any sense.

#Pascal

Because, like, getting these Starlink panels into Iran is not only against how Iran runs the show, but also against U.S. sanctions, right? It would be a violation of U.S. law to export that to Iran, right?

#Hugh Miles

Indeed. So, you know, there are multiple logistical, financial, practical reasons why all of this is just totally unimaginable. And at the same time, American politicians, Israeli politicians, leaders—including the Israeli Mossad themselves—were taking responsibility for these demonstrations. Israeli media said that Mossad was on the ground in Tehran. Mossad itself put out tweets in Farsi saying they were supporting, you know, the riots or the protests, or whatever you want to call them. At New Year, Mike Pompeo, the former CIA director, said that there were Mossad agents walking around the streets in Iran preparing. So, yeah, they were very open about it.

You know, the Israelis were very proud of it. There was talk on Israeli talk shows, on Channel 14, where Israeli journalists said that Mossad was driving the protests in Iran and that they were killing people on the ground—killing security forces—and that they were bringing in weapons. The Iranians showed thousands, tens of thousands of weapons on Iranian media, saying they had found and confiscated them, that they were being smuggled in to the protesters. So, I mean, all in all, it looked very clear that this was not an organic, natural protest against the Iranian authorities, as it was being presented in the West.

But rather, it looked very much like the familiar CIA–MI6 playbook that we’ve seen many times before in many countries, including Iran in 1953. What happened then was very similar to what’s happening now: you collapse the economy—which, you know, Western countries are obviously well placed to do. They did it in 1953 by stopping Iranian oil exports. And then there are protests. The next step is that when there are natural protests, you pay agitators, distribute weapons, and encourage them to create chaos.

And then the regime cracks down and there’s blood in the streets. You use this either to pressure the regime to stand down, as happened in 1953, or—as appeared to be the plan in this case—to intervene militarily and take some kind of action to finish the job and get rid of the regime. That seemed to be the plan. But the Iranians managed to stymie it, because after a few days of total chaos in Iran, when we saw so many videos of violence and destruction, they switched off the Internet. With help from the Russians—who are very experienced in handling Starlink technology, since they know it from Ukraine, where Starlink is used to maneuver drones—the Russians knew exactly how to switch it off and locate the terminals. And apparently, that’s what the Iranian security services did.

And there were lots of arrests, and the terminals were confiscated. Once the agitators could no longer coordinate, the protests immediately stopped. Then what happened was that there were vast pro-government demonstrations in Iran—certainly tens of thousands of people. I mean, obviously, it’s very difficult to know; the Iranian regime claimed there were millions. I don’t think that’s very likely, but the videos showed what looked like tens of thousands of Iranians on the streets supporting the government. Which, you know, obviously they didn’t have to do—they didn’t have to come out if they didn’t want to. So there were these mass pro-government demonstrations, a kind of

rallying around the flag, and many videos of Iranians saying they were supporting their government and so on.

And, of course, none of this was reported in the Western media at all. I mean, the Western media was, you know, once again, totally misleading in its coverage. It peddled this line that was apparently aimed at paving the way for foreign intervention. Which, of course, is what we've come to expect from Western media. We know that Western media is pathologically anti-Iranian and does not represent the Israel-Iran conflict fairly. So that's what we saw.

#Pascal

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this could happen again at any time. So please consider subscribing not only here but also to my mailing list on Substack—that's pascallottaz.substack.com. The link's in the description below. And now, back to the video. So, even social media was flooded, right? Especially Twitter, or X. I think I've never seen that many—well, I have seen that many in the context of the genocide—but with Iran, it's just amazing.

Like, how many accounts started posting videos they claimed were anti—uh, government protests, that later turned out to be clearly labeled as either pro-Iranian government protests or, uh, nothing to do with Iran at all? There were so many pictures that actually showed protests in the U.S.—you know, on U.S. streets with stop signs—yet some accounts seriously claimed, "Look, they're attacking with gas," when what was used was some kind of pepper spray or whatever, and clearly from the United States. I mean, there was a massive, massive online social media attack—or, you know, an attempt at narrative shaping. Just massive.

#Hugh Miles

It was phenomenal. I mean, The Guardian, for example—one week, I counted seventy-four articles. Seventy-four! Seventy-four articles published on Iran in a single week. I mean, it's absolutely extraordinary. You know, this tsunami—all, of course, essentially saying the same thing. Like you said, there was a lot of misrepresentation of the videos. BBC Newsnight misrepresented pro-government demonstrations as anti-regime demonstrations. The BBC also misquoted the Supreme Leader when he said that thousands of people had been killed by Mossad-backed agitators, and they didn't report his full statement. They just said thousands of people had died, without giving the necessary context—that he was saying this was done by Mossad- and CIA-armed agitators. That was his full statement, but they omitted that.

And, of course, you know, there was also this very famous performance by an Iranian dissident, this émigré lady called Masih Alinejad, who appeared at the United Nations. She cried and talked about millions of Iranians being killed. This was reported by Reuters and broadcast all around the world. They didn't mention the fact that this lady, according to WikiLeaks in 2009, was a U.S. intelligence

asset. Right? She's in WikiLeaks, and it says her identity had to be protected. They also didn't mention that, according to public U.S. government information, she's been paid over 800,000 U.S. dollars to make propaganda against Iran while she's been in exile in the West. And, of course, Reza Pahlavi, the son of the Shah, you know, lives in Maryland and obviously can't go to Iran.

He was front and center there. So, you know, all the opposition groups—we're talking about the monarchists, the Kurds, the MEK, which is this weird cult that fought with Saddam Hussein against Iran in the Iran–Iraq War—you know, they're all given airtime. And so it was, you know, all the stops were pulled out, really, by the West to try and collapse the regime. And, you know, of course, it's worth pointing out that the Iranian government—well, Iran—is not a threat to America, right? It's not of any strategic consequence. This is all about Israel. And ultimately, this is all about Iranian independence and Iranian support for Palestine. And that is what's driving this whole extraordinary project to try and overthrow the regime.

#Pascal

And, you know, there's nothing surprising about the Israelis and Americans trying to do that. A lot of us in this alternative social media space have been expecting that something would happen around November or December 2025, because it was utterly clear that after the 12-day war, the end of that war was just a ceasefire, not the end of it. And people like John Mearsheimer and others have said, look, it's a strategic imperative for the Israelis to finish the job now that the Iranians are relatively weakened—not completely, but relatively. So they would obviously want to do it again. The surprising thing is how the Americans and the Israelis went about it. It wasn't an open attack the way the 12-day war was—missiles flying, trying to decapitate the regime. It was the regime-change, CIA-style underground approach. But it failed. In the end, the hard blow with the military didn't materialize. Now, why is that?

#Hugh Miles

Well, I think it stands for a number of reasons. I mean, clearly the Iranian regime managed to ride out this storm, and that shows it has resilience. I can think of a number of possible reasons why. But I'd say one fundamental reason this failed—and the 1953 coup worked—is that, in other examples where the CIA has used exactly the same playbook, like Ukraine, the conditions were different.

#Pascal

I mean, the Maidan—this is the Maidan approach: organic protests, make them bloody, have people killed on both sides, and boom.

#Hugh Miles

Yeah. And, you know, Allende in 1973, Chile—again, economic collapse leads to the erection of the Pinochet dictatorship, which was the same playbook. But, I mean, to answer your question, why did this happen? I think the reason this happened is because the power of America and the West is diminishing, and they no longer have the influence to control the developing world—or the third world, or whatever you want to call it—in the way they have through history. And this is down to all sorts of reasons, but one of the key ones, I believe, is that America has lost its mojo. It's lost its aura.

You know, we've all witnessed this horrific, ongoing genocide for the last two years, where America and Britain are completely complicit and culpable. And, you know, all the Western institutions have defended it—the Western media, the Western politicians. We've all been totally shocked to see the rulebook thrown out the window, international law trampled underfoot. And now we have Donald Trump in the White House, who just epitomizes racism—everything that's unattractive about America. You know, he's such a liar, he's such a misogynist, he's such a racist. So America no longer looks like an attractive country. Back in 1973, when Operation Ajax overthrew the regime, America was very different.

You know, people were really attracted by it—Iranians wanted to go there. They dreamt of it. Everyone thought that, you know, everyone had huge belief in America and Western values. And now no one buys that anymore. Young people don't believe any of it. So I think it's fundamentally because the West has lost its way. People are no longer prepared to become traitors, to turn on their own government and take the American dollar to go against their own country like they did in 1973. That's fundamentally why. But it's a combination of reasons—basically, the West has lost the power to control the world the way it used to.

#Pascal

Scott Ritter put forward an interpretation of the end of this regime-change approach in Iran that I found interesting. I don't know how much we can follow it, but he was reasoning that it might actually have been a deliberate move by Donald Trump to force the hand of the pro-Iran regime-change neocons—to tell them, "OK, fine, let's do it." But then he didn't follow up with the military leadership, because that would have exposed the networks of this group of U.S. and Israeli neocons who wanted to do it. And now it's going to be really, really hard to put that back together again.

Once these assets are exposed, and once the depots have been depleted and the routes through which these Starlink panels entered Iran have been dismantled, it's really hard to get them back together. So then Ritter said, like, OK, maybe it just all fell apart—but maybe the Trump team, who didn't want to do this form of intervention and had a different plan for the region, actually wanted to undermine that faction. How much credence do you give to this interpretation?

#Hugh Miles

Well, I mean, I agree that this failed coup attempt was years in the making, right? It didn't happen overnight. Obviously, an enormous effort had been invested in this—building up these assets, smuggling in weapons, smuggling in Starlinks, and so on. So yeah, it was a major investment that failed. I think Donald Trump backed out of it—backed out of attacking Iran—because there was no chance of any strategic success. I don't think the plan had failed where the Iranians had managed to suppress the coup attempt. And then what? You know, the problem with Donald Trump is that although he's absolutely dedicated to serving Israel, that's his number one priority.

Israel's main priority is to collapse the regime in Iran. The problem Donald Trump's got is that his hands are tied. He's not able to put any boots on the ground because the American people are totally against foreign invasions. So what could he do? All he can do is bomb and try decapitations—and he obviously tried that, and it didn't work. So there was no realistic prospect of strategic success. Essentially, this imperial attempt to collapse the Iranian regime was defeated. And I think that if there had been any chance of it working, they would have continued—and they'll try again if they can. But they failed.

And it's important to note that their failure is an absolutely historic one, because if they had succeeded, Iran would have been plunged into total chaos, right? It would probably have lasted for decades, or even a century, of chaos and civil war among all these groups, because Iran would have been, you know, struggling. And obviously, the axis of resistance across the Middle East would have lost its main sponsor. So the Israeli project could have expanded, and Palestine would have been wiped out. Israel would have been able to, you know, fulfill its dreams, secure its hegemony across the whole region, and expand into all the other Arab countries it wants to expand into—because it's really only Iran that's keeping Israel's project in check. So the fact that this coup attempt failed has made an absolutely colossal difference in historical terms.

#Pascal

So are we seeing now a change in the U.S. approach to West Asia? I mean, right now, over the last five or six days, the U.S. seems to be withdrawing from Syria—these areas it held in the Kurdish region in the northeast. And of course, as others have said, they're selling out those allies, right? As in, "Here you go," and now they're being attacked by these ISIS fighters who are on the government side, because the Syrian government is controlled by a former al-Qaeda, al-Nusra head, right? And really bad things are about to happen over there. But why are they withdrawing now from these positions they've held for ten or twelve years?

#Hugh Miles

Well, the United States supports the Kurds—of course, it has done for many years. But it also supports Ahmed al-Shara, the new Syrian government. So, you know, they're both its allies. Clearly, the Americans have decided to let al-Shara consolidate his power and expand. And we can only really guess why that is. But, I mean, essentially Syria is doing what the Americans want at the

moment. Al-Shara is obviously a very pragmatic leader. He's coming from a very weak position, with his country devastated by many years of tyranny and war.

And so, you know, he could lose power. Syria could go into chaos. So, you know, the Americans—at the moment he's obviously doing what they want, and he's not posing any threat to Israel, crucially. And that's ultimately what Israel wants. I mean, American policy in Syria is obviously dictated by Israel, and what Israel wants is a weak Syria. And currently, Israel's got that. So, you know, that's fine. Syria is now boxed in; it doesn't present any threat to Israel for the foreseeable future. And so al-Shara has been allowed to make this move and consolidate his power.

Now, obviously, if al-Shara should change his tune at any time and start to show any kind of hostility toward Israel or America, then one would certainly expect the Americans to go straight back to supporting the Kurds. But at the moment, al-Shara seems to have won American support, which is clever of him, given that he's got such a weak hand and has to manage so many internal and external problems. He's done well, from his point of view, to secure his power across Syria. And this was very necessary. If you overthrow, you know, the previous regime, then you have to consolidate your power if you're going to survive. You have to move quickly, and you have to, you know, eliminate other armed forces.

And, you know, this was the fault we saw in other revolutions, like in Egypt and so on — that the new incoming ruler dilly-dallied, didn't move efficiently to eliminate the deep state and remove other power centers. And as a result, there was a counter-revolution and they were overthrown. So, you know, al-Shara had to do this, really. From his point of view, it's a great success because the Kurds were a major threat to his authority. But of course, it's not over yet. We don't know — the Kurds haven't disappeared. And now there's obviously a lot of bad blood between him and the Kurds. So, you know, the problem isn't going to vanish completely.

#Pascal

Yeah, let's leave that one aside. But what do you foresee? Is the United States now done with Iran? Because I don't think so. We still have reports about a whole carrier strike group on its way to the Gulf. What are you expecting to happen at the moment? Because, I mean, Israel obviously wants Iran dead on a plate. What do you think is going to happen over the next couple of weeks and months?

#Hugh Miles

Well, I think we have to expect that they're going to try again with Iran because, you know, as you say, Israel definitely wants to destroy Iran. And, obviously, Netanyahu personally has an interest in perpetual war because it keeps him in power and keeps him out of prison on corruption charges.

Donald Trump also has an interest in perpetual war because it means we don't talk about the Epstein files, which he hasn't released yet. So, you know, I think they've got strong motives to continue.

So I would expect that they'll try again with Iran, you know, sooner or later. I don't think the story is over. But, I mean, having now tried twice in seven months to overthrow the regime—first with this twelve-day war and now with this hybrid “boots and bytes” attack—they've obviously used up a lot of capital and played a lot of their cards. So it seems that Iran has managed to defeat the imperial onslaught for now. But yeah, surely they'll try again.

#Pascal

Plus, I mean, it seems that Iran has found a bit more confidence in its cooperation, especially with the Russians. But also, on the Chinese side, we have a lot of people claiming there are many flights going into Iran from China. So, do you think Beijing and Moscow acted fairly quickly over the last couple of months, trying to prop up the Iranians?

#Hugh Miles

For sure. I mean, Iran wouldn't have survived without Russian and Chinese economic and military support. So, absolutely, they are helping the Iranian regime stay in power. And without them, the regime certainly would have fallen, I think. I don't think that's going to change. I don't think there's any chance the Russians and the Chinese are going to withdraw their support anytime soon. They don't want Iran to collapse into chaos. I mean, no one wants Iran to collapse into chaos apart from Israel, which would love to see Iran dissolve into civil war and fighting factions. But it's not in anyone else's interest for that to happen. Of course, the Israelis are driving U.S. policy, so there's every reason to think they will try again.

#Pascal

What do you think, though? You know, the approach of the Americans now toward Gaza and the Palestinians actually faces opposition in Israel. And whatever we think of the setup that Donald Trump created with this UN Security Council Resolution 2803—which basically makes Gaza a kind of modern-day UN protectorate, which is horrible in its own way—the design is for the Board of Peace plus the International Stabilization Force to go in and replace the IDF. And the Israelis seem to hate it.

They don't want to give up. You know, they still occupy half of Gaza, and they still kill people daily, right? Since the ceasefire came into effect, they've killed more than 450 Palestinians there. I mean, again, a ceasefire to the Israelis means the other side stops shooting while they kill with impunity.

And if the actual Board of Peace plan and the International Stabilization Force idea go through, that would seriously impede the Israeli strategy. Do you think this is going to change something in the region?

#Hugh Miles

Well, in my opinion, this strategy has failed, and it's going to fail. I don't think Israel is going to survive much longer, to tell the truth. I think this war—or the genocide—has dealt an enormous blow to Israel. You have to remember that before the war started in 2023, the Israelis were already fighting among themselves. Very senior Israeli figures, including former prime ministers, were saying this was the end of Zionism, the end of Israel. They were even warning there could be a civil war. That was all in 2023. And now, after more than two years of genocide, Israel's popularity has totally plummeted around the world.

And, you know, particularly in the Arab world, you have to remember that Israel depends on the Arab countries for security. I mean, one of the things the genocide has shown us is that Israel depends on two factors outside its control to continue to exist—and that's Western support and Arab betrayal. And neither of these two factors can continue indefinitely. Should either of them change, then this becomes an existential problem for Israel. So, all in all, this collection of internal and external problems, I think, is forming a... it's impossible to see a way out.

You know, they've tried ethnic cleansing, they've tried genocide—it's failed. Ultimately, Hamas still exists, the Palestinians are still there, and I think the Israelis are losing confidence in the whole project. They're moving their money out. I mean, who would want to build a business or make a future in Israel now? The Israelis I know are planning to move out. So, I think—how many people, five years before the collapse of the Soviet Union, thought the Soviet Union was going to collapse? Right?

#Pascal

You know, true, true. Then again, the structure has been around for 80 years now. And do you actually have data? Do we know about things like capital flight or people leaving? I mean, we know that during the 12-day war, Israel had to forbid its people from leaving. It was like, "Okay, you're not allowed to flee, nobody is allowed to fly out of the country," because it could have been a mass exodus, right? So there are these kinds of weaknesses. And of course, we don't really know how many people in Israel have dual nationality—who could, you know, just on a dime, go back to the United States or Europe, where they came from, right? That's quite a problem for Israel.

#Hugh Miles

So this is Israel's 77th year, right? The Crusader Kingdom in Jerusalem lasted 88 years. The French occupation of Algeria lasted 132 years. The English occupation of Ireland lasted about 800 years.

Okay, sooner or later, these settler colonies come to an end, right? They lose, they fall apart. And we've seen this again and again through history. So it seems most unlikely that Israel is going to make it to 88 years like the Crusader Kingdom. And then it will naturally discombobulate, like apartheid South Africa, where Israelis realize that when there's no future, when no one wants to go there or invest there, they'll just vote with their feet, and the country will quickly fall apart—just like Algeria did, which was supposed to be eternal, and then, in a matter of a few weeks or months, it just reached a tipping point.

Ultimately, it's about confidence. And, you know, this can happen—the whole thing can unravel in very short order, where, in a matter of a few weeks or months, a million people can leave, which is what happened in French Algeria. So, you know, I think that we're not there yet, but I think this is inevitable, frankly, and it's coming because of this accumulation of problems. I mean, I know it seems unthinkable, but once upon a time the end of the British Empire seemed unthinkable. The fall of Rome seemed unthinkable. But then, after it happened, they seemed totally inevitable, and everyone said, "Oh, I always knew that was going to happen." So I don't think Israel is fundamentally different from any other settler-colonial project in the past.

#Pascal

And they've all gone the same way. Do you think, in their mind, the fall of Iran would be something that could stave this off?

#Hugh Miles

For sure. Yeah, I mean, absolutely. The Israelis would like to split up Iran. They obviously want to split up all the Arab and Muslim countries—that's their goal. They want to control them or break them up. And we've seen them do that. You know, they helped break up Sudan. They've tried to break up Somalia with Somaliland. They're trying to break up Yemen into pieces. So, of course, it's divide and rule, because if you can crack up these Arab countries, then, you know, that gives them some hope. But other countries can't be broken up, like Egypt.

But instead, what you can do is maintain a pliant dictatorship that ultimately serves Israel's interests. And, you know, that's what you've got in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. These are the two most important Arab countries. And it's so crucial to Israel that Egypt and Saudi Arabia remain, you know, in their current state—in other words, not being allowed to choose their own leaders and being run by these secretive and corrupt absolute dictatorships, where they're ultimately prepared to act in Israel's interests rather than their own national interests. And that has to stay that way.

But, you know, if that were to slip, then that would again be an existential problem for Israel. And this is, again, one of the problems they've got from the genocide—that Arabs have obviously watched this in horror, and it's reaching a boiling point in the Arab world. Sooner or later, the Arab Spring is going to come back, and these regimes will be overthrown. Then Israel will no longer have

the comfort of knowing that the Arab regimes have its back. So this is going to happen, and when it does, that again is going to be another problem—another nail in the coffin.

#Pascal

Yeah, and of course, there's this other problem that, you know, for Israel to be successful, it needs Egypt to play along. But at some point, Israel would need to expel the remaining one and a half million or so Gazans into the Sinai—which would be a death sentence for the al-Sisi government if that happened. Because no, no, no, the Egyptians wouldn't take that. They couldn't. Even if they did, it would just mean the war would come to them, because then the bombing would start over there, right? So, I mean, in a sense, this whole project has really boxed itself into a very, very ugly corner, hasn't it?

#Hugh Miles

That's exactly right. They've boxed themselves in. I mean, the only way out is through, you know, mass ethnic cleansing and genocide, which has essentially now been tried and failed. So there's no other way out. And as the world loses confidence in Israel, then it's game over, like it was in South Africa. Obviously, Israel at the moment is totally dependent on Western aid, military aid, and Western support—above all, U.S. support. But we can see that all of that is changing in the polls. It's shifted so much in the last couple of years.

I mean, the very dramatic change in public opinion—obviously mainly among Democrats, but also among Republicans, and now young Republicans—I mean, this is a huge problem for Israel. And there's no sign at all that they're going to recover from this. I mean, we've seen Mamdani being elected in New York; that was another earthquake. So they've completely boxed themselves in. And, you know, yes, they would love to push a million Palestinians into the Sinai, but Sisi cannot accept that. He's made that completely clear. It would run contrary to his narrative about why he should be in power. I mean, obviously, he's got almost no legitimacy—or zero legitimacy—anyway.

So he's struggling, so he's come up with this narrative about why he's, you know, the protector of Egypt. And this would be a fatal blow to his legitimacy if it were to happen. And no, I mean, he's made that completely clear. So has Jordan—they're not going to accept this. That puts Israel in a difficult position. Now, Israel's recognized Somaliland and clearly has plans to move Palestinians there. But I don't think anyone really believes it's realistic that a million Palestinians are going to be moved from Gaza to Somaliland. So the problem rolls on. Ultimately, Hamas is still there—they're not going to give up their weapons to the Board of Peace.

No one is going to be able to disarm them. So essentially, the war is still on. We're in a pause—well, not even a pause in the war. As you say, people are dying every day, so sooner or later it'll flare up. Nothing is finished, nothing is resolved. But what's changed is that Israel has lost so much support and has become strategically much, much weaker than it was. And this is, you know, they're facing

an existential crisis. I think Israelis are aware of that, and they're now getting their second passports ready and making alternative plans and arrangements, because everyone can see now which way the wind is blowing.

#Pascal

So overall, your assessment is that time is now playing against Israel. And when we look at it from Iran's side, the longer they can resist these onslaughts—and we've had two in seven months—the better the situation gets for them. Or do you see a strategic impediment that would make the future bleak for Iran?

#Hugh Miles

No, no, this has always been the Arab and Muslim position—that Israel is an aberration. It's against history, it's against geography. It's a foreign implant that's been put in the region, and sooner or later it will be expelled, just like the Crusader Kingdom was expelled after 88 years. So they know this is going to happen sooner or later. Right now, Israel has things under control because of its Western support and because it's managed to install these pliant Arab dictators in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and surrounding countries who block any support for Palestine. But this is not a stable situation. Sooner or later, the Arab Spring will come back, and these dictators will be overthrown.

And, of course, the Arabs—there's no love whatsoever for Israel. So as soon as they get freedom and are able to choose their own leaders, then, you know, it's going to be so different. So, no, I mean, I think all Arabs and Muslims in the region are playing the long game, and they know—this is Hamas's view as well—that you can't overthrow Israel today, but they're in a protracted war, a protracted people's war, just like Mao Zedong talked about in his philosophy of fighting long wars of resistance. And sooner or later, you know, it's very difficult to overthrow a colonial power—they have enormous resources.

But it takes a long time. It takes enormous sacrifice, whether it's in Vietnam or in Algeria. Of course, millions of people have to die—this is understood. But ultimately, the people will win because they can make the price of occupation too high for the colonialists. And in the end, the colonialists will give up because they have somewhere else to go, and they'll decide it's not a price worth paying anymore. But the people who live there will always live there; they're not going anywhere. So ultimately, the Israelis will pack their bags and go back to where they came from.

#Pascal

I mean, the Israeli narrative is, of course, that this is their land, right? That it's been their land for 3,000 years and the Arabs are the occupiers. But I think reality will seep in over there as well. And

just for the sake of the people in Israel today, they need to find a way to somehow live in that neighborhood, right? To somehow make friends in that neighborhood and make peace with the Palestinians, wouldn't they?

#Hugh Miles

Well, I mean, they had that opportunity, and, you know, clearly that's been squandered. I mean, once upon a time, that might have been feasible. Things could have been so different for Israel. I mean, Israel has made bad choices, and they've been helped to make bad choices by America. They've destroyed themselves, and, to be honest, they've almost destroyed Judaism, tragically. Judaism has been so damaged by Israel—once a liberal religion open to Jews from all different backgrounds—and now, because of this Zionist project, obviously the Palestinians are the first victims of Zionism, but many non-Zionist Jews are also victims of Zionism as well.

So, no, I mean, the whole project has been a total disaster and is gradually coming apart. But, I mean, personally, I often think about the 14th-century North African polymath Ibn Khaldun, who wrote in his magnum opus, **The Muqaddimah**. He wrote about how nations are like people, right? They're born, they grow up, they mature, and then ultimately they get sick, they decay, they fall apart, and then they die. And that is essentially what we're seeing in Israel. What Ibn Khaldun wrote in **The Muqaddimah** is that typically it takes 100, 120 years. When a nation is born, you have very strong social solidarity—what he called **asabiyah**—where people really believe in the project at the beginning, and there's great social strength and cohesion.

And so, you know, the nation is established. It's very strong. But then, over the years, it starts to fall apart. People get lazy, they get corrupt, they start infighting with each other, and the strong nation starts to become weak. The weak nation then collapses, and a new one can be re-established in its place. And this is the cycle of nations. And this is where we've got to with Israel—it was set up very strong at the beginning, with solid foundations, but it lost its way. Now it's deeply divided; it's become very religious and conservative, which is totally out of sync with its backers in Europe, who are not religious conservatives.

So, you know, all of this has led to where Israel obviously shows the same problems that other Western societies have now, which it didn't have at the beginning, when it was this plucky colonial state just being set up. So, sadly, they've made a lot of bad choices, and the whole project has failed—but it didn't have to be this way. They could have made peace with the Arabs. It's a nice idea, but there was never any serious attempt to do it, one should add. I mean, the whole Israeli project started with the Nakba, and the whole thing has been based on the dispossession of Palestinians and on violence. So there was never a serious attempt to do it. But had they tried, then it might have been possible to have a, you know...

#Pascal

And we had the Oslo Accords. We had the Oslo process. We had the idea, we had a roadmap that was then consistently, systematically undermined and used as a pretext to do the opposite. It was quite sad. But yeah, there were ideas—there were ideas.

#Hugh Miles

Yeah, it could have been different. But no, sadly, they made bad choices. And soon they'll pay—you know, they're going to pay in full for that. But we haven't reached that stage yet. We're still, you know, because they have American support, and American power is declining. But still, obviously, America has great resources and is still devoted to supporting Israel. So they can keep the show on the road for a few more years. But I don't think anyone should be banking on Israel in the long term anymore.

#Pascal

Right. Hugh, thank you for your assessment, and especially for breaking down what happened with Iran and your thoughts on the future of Palestine as well. People will want to read more from you—where should they go?

#Hugh Miles

They should check out Arab Digest, which is the website I set up about ten years ago. It's an independent media company, a subscription website, and we talk about all these issues and Middle Eastern politics.

#Pascal

Everybody, go and check out ArabDigest.org. Hugh Miles, thank you very much for your time today.