

Scott Ritter: Full-Scale War as Iran Attacks All U.S. Targets

Scott Ritter is a former Major, Intelligence Officer, US Marine, and UN Weapons Inspector. Ritter discusses why the US made a terrible mistake by attacking Iran, and Iran will likely prevail. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: [buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng](https://www.buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. Today we're joined by Scott Ritter, a former UN weapons inspector, US Marine Corps intelligence officer, and author, to discuss the US and Israeli attack on Iran and what appears to be a very extensive retaliation by Iran. You've been watching this over the past few hours since the attack began—what do you make of it?

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, this is a very concerted effort to remove the regime from power. Both Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu declared the goal and objective of this campaign to be regime change, and they made the effort. I mean, they struck the residence of the Supreme Leader, they tried to kill the president of Iran, and they've hit the residences and places of business of many of Iran's senior leadership, both military and civilian. There are some casualties. Apparently, the president and the Supreme Leader aren't among them, but this was a decapitation effort that is ongoing as we speak. And the Iranians promised that if this war came, their response would be different from what it was during the 12-day war—and we're seeing that: a broader range of target sets, and so on.

You know, we're very early in this process, so it's impossible to predict outcomes—except to say this: we didn't kill him. If the goal is regime change and you don't kill the regime, you've failed. And I think this failure, unless it's immediately reversed, will be the beginning of a cascading sequence of events linked to that original failure. What I mean by this—and I think you and I discussed it the last time we talked—is that this war is going to be defined by the availability of munitions on the part of the United States. When the United States runs out of ammunition, it runs out of the ability to project power in a meaningful way. And we knew, based on the warnings of American generals and admirals, that the military believed there were insufficient resources to carry out this task—that they weren't going to be able to succeed.

And I think their worst nightmares are coming true, because in military operations, especially, it's a resource-intensive war. What happens is, you have targets that need to be struck, and you have resources that are brought in to strike those targets. The goal is to take out a certain target deck, and then you take those resources and reallocate them to other, follow-on missions. We saw this during Desert Storm. The United States had two F-15E Strike Eagle squadrons. These were, at that time, very valuable resources because of their ability to penetrate deeply and strike with precision. They were allocated in the opening phases of the conflict to take out Iraq's ballistic missile launch capability.

And then they were supposed to be reallocated to the air campaign in Basra and Baghdad. The plan was based on those resources being available at a given time to have an impact on the Iraqi target deck. Here we have an Iranian combat campaign, and it's built around using a certain amount of resources to achieve decapitation and security suppression. Before moving on to the next phase of targets, you reallocate those resources. They failed, which means that resources that should be reallocated now have to stay on the target deck and are being reinforced by resources diverted from other missions.

And so now you start to see a disruption in the campaign. Normally, you can ride this one out. You can say, "Okay, we're going to suppress, suppress, suppress, and move on." But each one of these actions is using ammunition, of which there's a finite quantity. So when you start a campaign knowing you don't have enough ammunition to see it through—that you have to win quickly—and right from the start you see the campaign fall apart, well, no plan survives initial contact with the enemy. That's true today. Regime change did not work.

If regime change is required to achieve the necessary conditions for people to rise up, and so on, you have to stay on that target deck. That means the munitions you used initially didn't get the job done. They're gone. They can't be replaced. You now have to take munitions from other target decks, bring them in with the resources, and keep striking. So you're burning through even more ammunition, taking it away from those other target decks, and creating a cascading sequence of failures that will deplete your munitions without achieving any of the objectives. That's the definition of defeat. And so, again, it's very early, but I'd say the indications are that the United States has already lost this war.

#Glenn

Well, what do you make of the, I guess, lack of escalation control? Because in all the wars we've seen over the past, at least 30-plus years, there's been an effort to have complete control over escalation. But this time—what degree of escalation, which actors should be involved, when the war should come to an end, what's considered acceptable targets—all of this seems to be not under control. I see reports of Iranian retaliatory strikes on Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Jordan. There have been some reports of explosions in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—essentially, all regional targets where U.S. bases are located are being hit. And, of course, there have also been strikes in Tel Aviv

and Haifa, in Israel. What do you think the thinking is now in Iran? Because they're certainly not holding back or following any traditional escalation ladder here.

#Scott Ritter

Well, what is the thinking in Tehran? They just absorbed a decapitation strike designed to kill their senior leadership, for the purpose of collapsing the government—a system that's been in place for 47 years. So right off the bat, the question is, what do they have to lose? I mean, if they're coming at you to kill you, do you respond with an escalation ladder, or do you say, "We are engaged in an existential struggle for survival"? The job of the Iranians is to finish this conflict with the Islamic Republic intact. But much as we've seen in the case of Russia and Ukraine, Vladimir Putin has articulated not just the need to end the war, but to end it in a way that addresses the root causes of the conflict, so that we don't see it break out again five or ten years from now.

The United States and Israel have just said they're in the business of destroying the Iranian regime. The purpose of this campaign is to eliminate Iran. So for the Iranians to come out of this war alive, but with Israel and the United States still maintaining a regime-change posture, that doesn't solve anything. So what are the Iranians up to? A) They're in a battle for existential survival. B) They have to win this war. And victory in this war means regime change. Now, the United States has always talked about regime change, meaning it's not just about removing the regime but changing its behavior. One way to change the behavior of the current administration is to guarantee its political demise. I believe Donald Trump has committed political suicide here.

It's the end of the Trump presidency—this decision to bomb Iran. If he doesn't win quickly and decisively, it's over. He'll be routed in the midterm elections and impeached, probably convicted. And that's the end of him. So there's regime change right there. Benjamin Netanyahu, likewise—if you don't get regime change and Iran retaliates and does significant damage to Israel, it's the end of Benjamin Netanyahu, his viability as a leader. Then the question is, what replaces them? And if, by striking regional leaders who have been acquiescent to the Israeli and American vision of the Abraham Accords and the diminishment of Iranian power, what you may see is Gulf Arab nations realizing that the United States isn't there.

And Israel is a nation that can be defeated, and you'll see a change in the attitude of the regime. For the various Gulf Arab nations, it's very important for Iran that when this war ends, it's not like what happened at the end of the 12-day war. You brought an end to the fighting, but the mindset was still in place to achieve regime change—and that's what we see today. When this war ends, Iran must not only survive but must have created a geopolitical transformation in the region, moving away from supporting U.S. and Israeli regime-change plans against Iran. So this is going to require the defeat of the United States military.

Now, the U.S. military is defeated not by sinking ships or shooting down airplanes, but by not winning. It's the same thing with Hezbollah against Israel in 2006. Israel came out and said, "Our

goal in the short August war of 2006 is to destroy Hezbollah completely.” And at the end of the war, Hezbollah was still there, raining death and destruction down on Israel. Hezbollah wins. If the United States has said the goal is regime change, and when this war ends Iran is still there, Trump will have lost. And that will be devastating for a man who, you know, speaks of peace through strength. You’re not very strong when you lose.

It’ll be devastating for a man who renamed the Department of Defense to the Department of War to then go out and lose a war. Um, but this is what Iran needs to do. Iran needs to win this war. They need to physically destroy Israel, and they need to outlast the United States. And again, the conditions for victory are very simple here—you just have to absorb all the ammunition the United States can fire at you, because there’s nothing more. That’s what the general said: when we run out, we run out. Um, and so I think that’s their goal here. This isn’t going to be over soon; it’s going to be a drawn-out affair.

Iran is ready for this. They’re prepared for it, and they have a plan. And we are—you know, no plan survives initial contact with the enemy. Well, the American plan is already disrupted because they didn’t get regime change. I think a lot of people are surprised by the scope and scale of the Iranian retaliation, that they didn’t go through an escalation ladder. That also has consequences, because now there will be political fallout from it. These Gulf Arab rulers govern on a slim thread of viability. The population has to believe that these rulers will bring them wealth and a high standard of living.

If your cities are suddenly blowing up, and you were told all along that this would never happen because the United States would defend you—but now the United States can’t defend you—suddenly these rulers look weak and ineffective. And who knows what will happen? But, you know, this is the Iranian game right now. I think they’re flipping the script. This is the geopolitical equivalent of a wrestling reversal. And the regime change strategy may now be that it’s not the United States and Israel succeeding in removing the Iranian regime, but that Iran will succeed in removing the Israeli regime, the American regime, and maybe many of the Gulf Arab states.

#Glenn

Well, that’s kind of the benefit that both Israel and the United States have had over the past thirty-plus years—they built up the image of being invincible or powerful. And with that, of course, comes a lot of soft power, because all countries will then fall in line. If this is the ultimate security provider—the one who can give you security or destroy you—then you fall in line. Of course, this is going to be very different if they don’t hold out. But in terms of Iran holding out, all they really have to do is dish out a lot of pain and wait out the Americans and the Israelis. But what’s the time constraint here, though? Because, as you said, the United States has limited resources. They have to ship them across the world, and at some point, you have to replenish. How long do you think the United States can keep such a high-intensity war going?

#Scott Ritter

I don't know the ammunition stockpile. I believe they were looking at a war that would last, you know, single-digit weeks. So if this war lasts five weeks, the United States runs out of ammunition. Iran just has to survive for five weeks, and that's it.

#Glenn

I'm not sure if you watched Trump's—well, let's call it a war speech—or I read it as a declaration of war. He essentially went back to the Islamic Revolution of '79, the issue of the American embassy, you know, the attacks in Lebanon in the '80s. So he went through essentially the whole history to explain all of America's grievances toward Iran—and, of course, the issue of nuclear weapons. What did you make of this speech? Or was it just... well, Trump didn't write the speech.

#Scott Ritter

He's reading words written by neoconservative, pro-Israeli warmongers who just trotted out the same old, tired arguments that have been made in the past. There was nothing new here. And the duplicity of the United States was on display as he spoke about a nuclear program that Iran was already making significant concessions on in Oman. So he's a liar. But let's throw away the words for a second—I saw an old, scared, fat man. This man's scared to death. He realizes he's in a world of hurt. He's crossed the Rubicon, and it's not going to end well for him. And I think he sees that. I think he sees the Trump legacy collapsing around him. He's not going to win the midterm elections.

He's betrayed his base like it's never been betrayed before. Israel was worried before this war started. You know, when Tucker Carlson went and talked to Mike Huckabee, if you looked at the Israeli press, they were saying, "Look, we're in trouble because there's a split now in the Republican Party about Israel." That split's going to just—I mean—it's going to grow and grow and grow, because this war is just stupid, stupid, stupid. It's all about Israel. It has nothing to do with the security interests of the United States. And Israel is going to be, perhaps, fatally hurt by this. This president has seen his presidency fatally wounded by his own actions.

And we're going to see a desperate man going forward. You can already see movement in Congress to change the law and empower the president to take control of the midterm elections so he can steal them, because he's not going to win them. What he has to do is avoid the kind of landslide that results not just in the House going Democratic, but in the Senate having enough anti-Trump sentiment to convict if he's impeached—because he will be impeached. What we saw was the end of the Trump presidency. I don't listen to his words; he didn't write those words. I looked at his delivery, and it was the delivery of an old, tired, fat man—scared. That's what I saw.

#Glenn

I guess all this—being the president of peace, ending all these wars, having his peace board—none of this really makes any sense. I mean, it could have been called good branding, but now I guess all

of that is lost as he becomes the ultimate warmongering president. I think it's very much the opposite of what happened in Venezuela—just in and out in one day, very limited, I guess, with the goal to kidnap a president and declare victory and celebrate oneself. But why was this so imminent, though?

Because there was this need to attack now—because over the past few days we've seen some American generals, leading military staff, arguing that we're not really that well prepared. We don't have enough, I think it was, defensive interceptor missiles, or we can't necessarily absorb all of Iran's retaliatory strikes. Maybe we should either not do this or wait. So why was there such a hurry to try to engage in this war when we aren't properly prepared, and if the strategies and war plans aren't really in place, well...

#Scott Ritter

Just a quick history lesson. I may have gone over this before, but I'll just reiterate it. During Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the flow of logistics into the region was called the TPFDD—the Time-Phased Force and Deployment Data, or something of that nature. When the war ended—well, we knew this going in. I knew in October, because I was on a planning cell with the Commandant of the Marine Corps, that we had crossed a line from which there was no coming back. The decision to go to war against Iraq wasn't made in the lead-up to January 16th or 17th; it was made in the middle of October when we began moving forces. Because once you begin moving forces, things start happening—they take on a life of their own—and you can't withdraw them without creating significant problems.

Because once you disrupt the TPFDD and try to reverse the TPFDD, you can't reconstitute it until months down the road. So you lose an entire window of opportunity. The same thing happened in 2003. They renamed the TPFDD—I forget what they called it, the flow of forces or something like that—but it was the same thing. They acknowledged afterward that we were prisoners to the system, that we had to go to war in March because the flow of troops, the flow of logistics, dictated it. And I said, watching this, we've reached a point of no return. We've deployed forces—for instance, air defense forces—and, you know, we robbed Peter to pay Paul.

We stripped down air defenses in Asia and Europe to bring them in and reinforce resources that were supposed to protect those regions in case of a conflict, but instead they were diverted to the Middle East. We can't keep them there forever, so there's only a limited window where they can remain. Then we began deploying all this strike capability—aircraft carriers, tactical fighters, refuelers, and so on—munitions, munitions, munitions. And once we started flowing that in, it has to be used, or else you have to reverse-flow it out. When you begin to reverse-flow it out, your window of strike opportunity expands. This is a politically driven war.

This war has nothing to do with the threat posed by Iran. I'll say that again: this war has nothing to do with the threat posed by Iran. This war is about the timing of outcomes. The president has a

midterm election coming up in November. He needs to be defining the debate among the American people about the future of his presidency by early summer—midsummer of this year. The belief was that if he could achieve what no other president has achieved in forty-seven years—removing the Iranian regime from power in a quick, not bloodless but relatively bloodless conflict—he would be a hero.

He would be seen as a man of peace because, through war, he brought peace, and he would carry that image forward. They couldn't not strike now, because waiting would mean bombing in the middle of summer, right in the height of the campaign. He needed a result by mid-summer, and bombing then would be devastating. So this war is driven by American domestic political prerogatives—if he didn't strike now, we'd have to start moving assets out of the region, and we wouldn't be able to reverse that or reach the same level of force again until mid-summer.

#Glenn

It's strange if they thought Iran would be the same easy target, though, because Venezuela was a one-day operation. It seems they were able to choke Cuba and take that annoyance of the past—well, the past 65 years—off the table, and without much, you know, even media complaining. But Iran... I think they might have misjudged it. Were you surprised to see all these Iranian missiles getting through to so many different regions? I thought all these countries across the region—the Gulf states—shouldn't their air defenses have been exhausted first, before all these missiles started coming through? It just seems like only in the—I mean, this war began this morning, and we're already seeing missiles going through to Bahrain, the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, and, as I said before, possibly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. And Israel, of course. How is this possible?

#Scott Ritter

Well, the 12-day war gave Iran tremendous insight into how the coordinated missile defense shield works—not just over Israel, but also over the U.S. shield in the region. They fired a lot of missiles that were designed to absorb Israeli and American defense capacity, not just to exhaust it, but to learn. I mean, this is a system, and you need to see how it functions—how radars communicate with one another, how you transition from an F-35 over Jordan, and how that radar feeds into a THAAD radar that's reinforced by Aegis radars, all getting a unified picture. The Iranians were collecting data. These are some of the smartest people in the world at doing these kinds of things.

I remind people, they hijacked the Beast of Kandahar. And they may have hijacked another American drone that went off the radar just a couple of days ago. These people are very, very good at what they do. And they were able to dissect the Golden Dome. Because remember, at the end of the 12-Day War, we didn't see waves of missiles coming in—we saw one, two, three. But the difference was, every single one of them hit, and they hit something of value. That's when

Netanyahu got on TV with his shaking hands, and that's when he called Trump. Trump was able to do the midnight hammer, the Al-Udeid exchange, to bring the conflict to an end. But the Iranians... broke the code.

They now knew how to defeat this system, and they could do it with individual missiles whose performance parameters made them impossible to intercept. Instead of leading with massed attacks—which would be very difficult right now, because I believe that over Iran we have a lot of aircraft flying around hunting missiles—you don't want to bring out mass launches. What you need are what I'll call "leakers": just one fired here, one fired there, one fired there. But all three hit their targets, because the Iranians have built missiles that can't be shot down by American-Israeli air defense. And that's what we're seeing right now.

We're seeing the Iranian missiles—the superiority of Iranian technology over missile defense. And a little off topic, but I just want to tell people: this is exactly what would happen to the Golden Dome if we ever built it and went to war against Russia, except that the consequences of that failure would be existential, because it would be nuclear. Missile defenses don't work. This might be one of those rare silver linings in a cloud. Nobody wanted this war. But if we can get out of it with nothing greater than the humiliation of the United States, it could be a wake-up call to future administrations that arms control actually works. We should give it a shot and not pursue the Golden Dome and all the things the Trump administration is doing.

Again, I do believe this is the end of the Trump administration. I don't believe they survive this. And, you know, one of the reasons is that the Iranians have exposed a \$1.5 trillion annual defense budget as an empty fraud. I mean, how do you explain this to the American people? You spend this much money, and you're getting swamped right now by Iranian missiles. Apparently, there are casualties in Bahrain—I don't know how many—but apparently there are American military casualties there, and we can expect more from this. The military has failed the American people. It's supposed to defend, it's supposed to be able to do things, and it hasn't been able to do them.

And our political leadership has failed the American people because they allowed a war to take place—a war of choice, not a war of necessity. Iran poses no threat whatsoever to the United States. So this is a war of choice. It's an illegal war of aggression, the highest war crime imaginable. It destroys the credibility of the United States. Who will ever negotiate with us again? Because once again, we were in the midst of negotiations with the Iranians, who were putting real, real solutions on the table, and we chose regime change. If I were the Russians, I would never sit down with Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner ever again.

They can't be trusted because they've been corrupted by this process. So, you know, this is just a bad—it's a bad day for Iran, first of all. They were hit, and there are dead Iranians. We shouldn't overlook that. But we can't overlook that. We have a duty, a responsibility, to acknowledge this. But as an American, this is a horrible day for my country, because we have just self-identified as a nation incompatible with the rule of law and with the norms and values of global civilized society.

And we're not even going to win. So this is bad news all around. The only good news is that this regime will be over.

#Glenn

Just like in the 12-day war in June, this surprise attack happened during negotiations when there was allegedly progress being made, which suggests that either the negotiations were a fraud or that progress was never real. You know, one often assumes that dominance is the ideal format for security—that you can negotiate from a position of strength. But that's problematic, I think, not just for the United States but for the political West, which has held dominance for the past 30-plus years. When you're in such a position, you stop setting priorities. You can absorb a lot of costs, so you end up doing reckless things—and, of course, hubris.

So perhaps you're right. If it's a little wake-up call, it could be healthy before we end up engaging in something much grander and stupider, like taking on Russia in a war. Let me just ask one last question here: what do you expect in terms of external support? So far, I've only seen Yemen claim that they're going to start targeting ships in the Red Sea again. And I saw some reports, which I haven't been able to confirm, that they also launched some ballistic missiles. Do you expect to see anything coming from militias in Iraq, Lebanon, or Palestine? Or have you heard anything about Russia or China giving any indirect support? Or is it still too early?

#Scott Ritter

Well, according to what I read, before the attack on Iran, Israel launched a massive, multi-hour suppression of Hezbollah—they bombed southern Lebanon extensively. I believe that was to suppress Hezbollah, which had positioned itself to participate. Hezbollah had said they would not join a conflict of limited scope, but if it became a full-scale conflict, they would join. I expect—look, this is an existential conflict for Hezbollah. If the Iranian regime collapses, if they fall, it's the end of Hezbollah. Hezbollah cannot survive without the support of Iran. So there's no reason for Hezbollah to sit on the sidelines and watch Iran be destroyed.

So I believe you're going to see Hezbollah decisively engage in this because it's now a war of existential consequence. Ansarallah is doing it. Hamas—I think we might see Hamas actually involved, especially if they perceive Israeli weakness to, you know, make a move, so that you get a full press from the militias as well. You know, it's just a massive miscalculation on the part of Israel and the United States. I've always said that the U.S. military is professional—and they are. We have the capacity to inflict a lot of damage, and we do. But intelligence is a very important part of this, too, and the United States has, over the course of several decades now, allowed the intelligence process to be politicized.

So instead of providing fact-based information to the leadership so they can make the best-informed decisions possible, it becomes an echo chamber of decisions that are already inevitable. The

leadership says, "We've already made the decision—make the intelligence fit this so we can justify it." And when you do that, all you do is—you know—you delude yourself. I believe it's going to turn out that way, and you saw this when President Trump dismissed Tulsi Gabbard's assessment regarding Iran's nuclear weapons program, where she said there is no nuclear weapons program, no evidence of this happening, etc. He said, "No, she's wrong."

Well, who is he relying upon? Either a cell outside the control of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence—which would be fundamentally illegal—or the Israelis, meaning the president is now taking guidance from Israel over his own intelligence officials. I think decisions were made to initiate a conflict against Iran that weren't based on the kind of informed advice you'd normally get from the intelligence community, but rather on advice that had been politically tainted—designed to tell the president what he wanted to hear, not what he needed to hear. And that also guides how military plans are developed. You know, you have a mission, but that mission has to be based on reality.

How you accomplish this mission has to be based on a realistic understanding of the problem. You can't solve a problem unless you've accurately defined it first. The job of the intelligence community is to define the problem accurately so a solution can be found. But if the intelligence community is now lying to the president about what's going on in Iran—for instance, saying the people will rise up, that all you have to do is bomb these targets and the people will rise up—well, the military bombs those targets, but the people don't rise up. Or you're told, you know, we'll kill Khamenei, but we don't. If they can't kill Khamenei, the American people need to understand who this man is and what he represents—what an Islamic republic is, what the Shia faith is.

He's the second most influential and powerful Shia theological figure in the world, after, I think, Sistani in Najaf. We tried to kill him this morning—we tried to kill a major religious figure. This would be the equivalent of someone trying to kill the Pope, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, or the Archbishop of Canterbury. That's the scope and scale we're talking about. And then you add to that the fact that, nationally, they tried to assassinate the president of Iran. This is insanity of the highest order—insanity of the highest order. So don't be surprised when the Iranians respond in a way that reflects the insult they've received. You mentioned Russia and China.

#Scott Ritter

Some people say, "Oh, well, Russia and China will encourage this conflict because it weakens the United States." I respect you as an expert and all that—maybe you'll disagree with me—but I think you might actually agree when I say that the goal of Russian foreign policy isn't to destabilize the United States, but just the opposite: to create a stable world where everything is predictable. The Russians want predictability. They want stability. They're not looking to defeat America or bring it down. They're not looking to generate chaos. And China is the same way.

They want to live in a world where rules are adhered to, because rules that are adhered to create a system of sustainable development and predictable outcomes. So the role of China and Russia, I

don't believe, is going to be, "How can we get Iran to defeat America?" I think their role is, "How can we bring an end to this conflict without destabilizing the world?" I think you're going to see a lot of pressure put on Iran by Russia and China not to allow this conflict to expand into economic targets. I mean, we see political and military targets being hit, but we haven't seen economic targets being hit.

#Glenn

And I think that's the final red line.

#Scott Ritter

So I think Russia and China will be trying to keep Iran from crossing that red line. They've done their best to make sure Iran can ride out this storm. Iran wins by not dying. Because if the United States and Israel fail in regime change, I believe that's the end of the Trump administration, and I believe that's the end of Benjamin Netanyahu as a politically viable Israeli politician. So you've just reversed the script—you've done regime change at the points of origin of this conflict. But again, Russia and China aren't looking for regime change; they're looking for stability. They want this war to end, and they're working to bring that about. So I think that's what the role of Russia and China is going to be.

#Glenn

No, I think you're probably right. That's this whole view we often have in the West—looking at international conflicts as a struggle between the good guys and the bad guys, where peace will come once the bad guys are defeated. I don't see the Chinese or the Russians thinking that way. I think they're more concerned about managing competing interests because, you know, if one rival is defeated, that doesn't mean it's the end of the international system or the security competition. In fact, I think war produces unpredictability, often radicalism. So it's not what—you know, I don't think anyone wants to see America defeated; that would be a shock to the system. But yeah, to bring them down a peg or two, probably. Yeah, probably.

But the war with Iran—this is something that could trigger World War III, which we could be looking at. So I don't think they want to see that at all. Sorry, just one last question. You mentioned the economic targets. The Strait of Hormuz—if that's shut down, that's the ultimate economic target, isn't it? I'm not sure it would be a good night for the global economy, but it would definitely be a pretty big hit.

#Scott Ritter

Well, the Strait of Hormuz can be shut down without permanently damaging the world's energy security. It's an on-and-off switch. The bigger problem is what happens if Iran starts targeting Saudi oil production infrastructure—Azeri, Kuwaiti, Emirati. That's irreversible damage, permanent damage.

This is the kind of thing that could collapse the economy for a long time. If you shut down the Strait of Hormuz, you stress the system, but you can de-stress it by opening it back up.

And so I think, again, what Russia and China will encourage is keeping the Strait open. But if Iran is going to play the economic card, then they'll want to limit it to a temporary closure of the Strait of Hormuz, not expand it into striking energy targets. My concern is that the United States and Israel, as they see their strategic air campaign falter, may choose to hit energy targets—in which case all bets are off, and Iran would respond quite harshly. So I think one of the biggest challenges facing Russia and China is how to keep this war from expanding into an economic war.

#Glenn

Well, as I said, we're still in the early—well, the first day of this war—which could fizzle out, or it could plunge us into World War III. What's it called? Operation Epic Fury. It's ridiculous. It's like children are running it.

#Scott Ritter

I think "Lion's Roar" is the Israeli version, or something like that—"Judean Roar" or something. Who knows? Yeah.

#Glenn

Well, thank you for taking the time. I know you're very busy, and it's very late—or early—there in the U.S., so thank you very much.

#Scott Ritter

Well, thank you. Thanks for your work. I mean, shows like this are very important right now for people because, you know, we're in a time of chaos—intellectual chaos. And I think you provide a very balanced approach to assessing problems. So thank you for the work you do.

#Glenn

Well, thanks again. I really appreciate it.

#Scott Ritter

Okay.