

# Iran War: What is the US Strategy? | Live with Michael Rossi

After one week of war, what is the US strategy and how is the population in the US taking this newest warscapade of the president of peace?

## #Pascal

Welcome everybody back to Neutrality Studies, and to Michael Rossi Polissai with, of course, Michael Rossi. Michael, welcome back.

## #Michael Rossi

Thank you, Pascal. Good morning. Hope everything's well with you. Happy Saturday. It's Friday evening here in New York, and it's been a busy week.

## #Pascal

Oh yes, a busy week indeed. The Iran war is now exactly one week old. It started pretty much around this time, Japan time—maybe a few hours later on your end. I think it was midnight or 1 a. m. in the U.S. when the first strikes hit. So, almost a week. Michael, what have we learned in the meantime? And can you give us a little rundown of what you think were the most important things that happened?

## #Michael Rossi

Yeah, well, you know, I had started our conversation with Ambassador Freeman last time by paraphrasing that quote from Sophocles: one must wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been. Here we are a week later—one must wait until Saturday to find out how much has been accomplished in the last week. As we were finishing up our conversation last week, I think within the last 15 minutes or so, it was just coming in through Telegram that Hamani was murdered. So as we were talking, I had shut Telegram off because I just didn't want to get all the noise coming in.

## #Pascal

Yeah, and Ambassador Freeman was making the point that Khamenei had been declared dead at least six times before that, during his 30 years of rule, right? So we were all very skeptical about whether the United States had really killed him or managed to kill him. But it turns out, yes, they did—they murdered the official leader of the Iranian state.

## **#Michael Rossi**

And as you and I talked about on WhatsApp right afterward, if I'm not mistaken, that was one of the last major obstacles to preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

## **#Pascal**

The man who issued a fatwa against nuclear weapons—absolutely. He forbade them, saying they were unholy, ungodly, that Iran would not make one.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Well, a lot of good that's done, because, you know, the Ayatollah is dead. Long live the Ayatollah. If I'm not mistaken, I think they selected his son—he's among the highest ranks, I believe.

## **#Pascal**

My latest information is that he hasn't been officially appointed yet, but he's basically the agreed-upon candidate.

## **#Michael Rossi**

So, if we can understand all of this, first of all, I think the biggest thing to take away from the last week is that, contrary to many presumptions within the Trump regime, the Iranian state has not collapsed. There is no regime change. If anybody thought that one could initiate regime change by simply decapitating the religious, symbolic head of a state that is largely run by the Islamic Revolutionary Council, not the Ayatollah, then whatever information they were being given—from whatever diaspora sources, Israeli Mossad sources—they really, really need to check the credibility of those things. Two things I can say beyond that: there were two really, really good videos that have come out on YouTube, both on our colleague Glenn Diesen's page.

The first one, shortly before you, I, and Ambassador Freeman spoke, was Glenn talking with Jeffrey Sachs, who gave his initial prognosis, saying this is going to be a disastrous war for the United States. And the one within the last 24 hours was Glenn interviewing Douglas McGregor, which is fascinating—really fascinating. I encourage all our viewers to go to Glenn's page and check it out. McGregor, who's much more of an insider from the U.S. military standpoint, is simply saying this is Netanyahu's war, one that Trump and the Trump administration have been dragged into.

Trump, as an individual, is just severely compromised—politically, economically, reputationally. And we're being given all kinds of conflicting reasons, rationales, narratives from Rubio, from Hegseth, about why we're involved in all of this. I think the initial understanding was that we could just, you know, go into Iran, throw in some missiles, get them to capitulate—just like we allegedly thought

would happen with Venezuela. But it turns out that, within this last week, Iran is not only resilient in this war but has conducted a significant amount of damage on American military, economic, and oil refinery bases within the Middle East, including many areas within the GCC, the Gulf Cooperation Council.

So we're talking about Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, among others, that have been significantly hit. And what's even more important to note is that—again, I'm still operating in a gray zone, we're still operating within the fog of war here—but the amount of devastation and destruction inflicted on Israel is one of the biggest kept secrets out there. Videos showing the destruction of places throughout Tel Aviv have been significantly edited—heavily, heavily censored. But what we find are really three emerging narratives, and it could be anyone's game. We have what the Western media industrial complex wants us to believe—the so-called legacy media: The New York Times, CNN, The Washington Post, but also Fox News.

BBC, The Telegraph, Sky News—all of them are painting a picture that Iran is about to collapse, that the U.S.-Israeli coalition is about to achieve full control over Iran's airspace. Another narrative is the gloom-and-doom prognosis coming from many YouTube channels—people like Glenn Deason, among others—saying this is an absolutely disastrous war that the United States won't be able to recover from, and that it's being dragged basically into Armageddon by Israel. And then the third one, the third narrative, is what we get from various Telegram channels that—take them as you will—are a little more balanced, in the sense that all three sides are just inflicting heavy, heavy damage on each other.

However, the thing to take away from all of this is that, one week in, whatever victories Trump or Netanyahu thought they were going to achieve over Iran have now proven to be not reachable in a matter of days, but weeks—if not months. Right now, we're talking about months. We're talking about how this war might last until September or October. How convenient—just in time for the midterm elections. So that's basically the long and short of what I can see on my side. What about you? I mean, you do this wonderful thing where you ask a lot of questions to people who are guests on your channel, but no one has ever asked you what you think about all of this. You know, what do you see on your end? I know I'm suddenly preemptively taking over and asking you the same question.

## **#Pascal**

Oh, no worries. I put out my little opinion pieces on my channel whenever I feel I have something to say. I mean, one of the most important insights for me last week—or one of the most shocking ones, really—is that there's a considerable number of people involved in this on the U.S. side who are just outright Christian fanatics, like evangelical fanatics. And I don't have any visuals right now, but we saw it yesterday, or the day before, when there was a prayer in the Oval Office with Trump's main evangelist—Paula White, I think her name is—a pastor who was there praying with him.

And okay, this praying—fine. But Pete Hegseth, I wasn't aware that he actually has two Christian fundamentalist tattoos: one being a Jerusalem cross on his body, and the other one, \*Deus vult\*—"God wills it." And that he's actually a very fundamentalist Christian believer in Christian Zionism, and that he's portrayed some of this U.S. "necessity" to go to war with this belief in, um, bringing about the end days. I mean, that was quite shocking.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Yeah, you know, I'm going to say this right off the bat, just to get one thing out. I think it would be absolutely hilarious—I mean, I would laugh my rear end off—if, in bringing about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, He appeared in Damascus instead of Jerusalem. And if you know what that means, it basically says that, really, the Muslims were correct all along.

## **#Pascal**

I keep saying I'd laugh the most if He actually appeared in Salt Lake City as it is. That's the other one, yeah.

## **#Michael Rossi**

I mean, that would make the cut. Look, we're talking about how evangelical Christianity is kind of like the modern-day version of high Episcopalianism in the United States. It's a state religion—more or less the religion of the ruling elite. Episcopalianism in the '50s and '60s was what evangelism is today. But yes, I saw that picture of a number of pseudo-Christians praying over their pseudo-Messiah, and it's just absolutely laughable. And, you know, I say this within the Lenten season as someone who is a practicing Orthodox Christian myself. There are times when I really understand why we had gladiatorial games with Christians back in the day—just to get rid of some of these annoying individuals.

But I mean, it is something in which, yes, there's another thing we can take away from this last week—and that's really a convergence of narratives that have been leading into this all-out situation. You know, as far as Israel is concerned, is this their attempt, their chance at achieving "Greater Israel"? We already see that they've laid claim, like their own version of \*Lebensraum\*, to vast areas of Lebanon and Syria—and, coming soon, Sinai. As far as the evangelicals are concerned, a lot of people in the United States don't give them much credibility, but they do have influence. They have access to many, many people in politics.

## **#Pascal**

And you know, what worries me is not just that a few people in the White House—which is bad enough—share this kind of lunatic belief. But let me just share this one with you. Here we go. There's this so-called religious—well, it's called the Military Religious Freedom Foundation—which is a

proper NGO founded by this guy, Mike Weinstein. I think it's basically his project, but he's been running it for many, many years. And he's basically a Jewish former member of the armed forces.

It's apparently his goal to keep the forces secular—to say, like, “No, no, no, this cannot be a religious force. We need to keep religion out of the military.” He created this foundation where people can basically call in or write in and complain when the firewall between religion and the state has been breached within the armed forces. They put out several articles last week; this is just the latest one I got yesterday: thirty Democratic members of Congress urged the DOD Inspector General to investigate MRFF clients' complaints about commanders framing the Iran war as an end-times prophecy.

That refers to another one they put out the day before yesterday—or maybe two or three days ago—saying that their organization, MRFF, has been inundated with complaints about gleeful commanders telling troops the Iran war is part of God's divine plan to usher in the return of Jesus Christ. So it's not just the White House; it's actually in the U.S. military forces—quite a number of commanders, officers, and others who share this belief. And, you know, my point in the video I made was that if enough people believe this, then the war is no longer about rational aims, nationalist goals, or just defeating Iran or achieving regime change.

Then the war itself becomes a goal, right? The war is, in and of itself, a good thing to the people who share this view—that you need the war, you need the good-against-evil fight, the final one, in order to get to the second coming of Christ. That would change the entire rationale. I mean, all the discussion about, you know, is it about regime change? Is it about the oil? Is it about control? Is it the neocons?—would be kind of out the window when this is the main motivation. Now, I don't think this is the only motivation, but it is a significant one, and it might actually have an impact on political decision-making. Yeah. Ultimately, this is about what Netanyahu wants.

## **#Michael Rossi**

I mean, at the end of the day, this is Netanyahu's war. It's a war that Israel has very successfully dragged the United States into.

## **#Pascal**

Although I'm pretty certain he's not keen on the Messiah coming back—I mean, it's not that. He can't share that view, right? No, he's not.

## **#Michael Rossi**

But the Likudists, of which Netanyahu has been an active part since the 1970s—since the moment when the Israeli state took on a much more Zionist, religious element and tried to justify its existence not as a state of refuge for Holocaust survivors but as the homeland of the alleged

descendants of the people of Judea—are always going to find willing and useful idiots in the West. Chief among them, the United States. But they'll also find them in Canada, Australia, the UK, Germany, and others. That's why I was saying this is really a convergence of a number of ideas and narratives. What we find, Pascal—and correct me if you think I'm wrong on this—is that the narrative, at least the justification coming from the United States, has changed almost every 24 hours this past week. The first was that Iran was going to preemptively attack.

The second one was that Israel was going to attack Iran. So we, the United States—this was according to Rubio—might as well get in on the fun. Another one was that Iran was going to assassinate Trump, so we had to go and assassinate the Ayatollah. A third one—and these are in no particular order—was that we need to bring freedom and democracy to these poor people who have been oppressed. Of course, this is after we've, you know, bombed an elementary school. And now the death toll is well over 150 children, if not more, including teachers and others. And then we have people like Hegseth who, I mean, at the end of the day, is a gym bro. I mean, what was his thing before? He was a weekend Fox News host who drank too much, who has \*Deus Vult\* tattooed on one of his man tits. So he's a trad bro.

At the end of the day, he's a trad bro who feels like this is his moment to shine, because Rubio apparently had his moment with, you know, Venezuela. And, I mean, we kind of look not just at Trump. I think Trump is somebody who's perfectly happy making sure the world can burn down the day after he's buried. I mean, that's ultimately what Trump wants. He just wants to die outside a jail cell with as much of his money as possible, and then the rest of the world can be damned. But we find there are a number of opportunists within the Trump regime—Vance, Rubio, Hegseth—who are trying to cement their legacy by finding some angle in combating Iran.

And at the end of the day—and this is another thing I've gotten from many of the commentaries I've seen on social media—my country is basically run right now by the biggest gaggle of mediocre idiots, sycophants, and opportunists you could possibly imagine. We have no long-term plan. In the video that Glenn and Doug McGregor were talking about, McGregor said one very important thing: tactics win battles, strategies win wars. I'm quoting directly from Colonel McGregor. And we, the United States—we don't have a strategy. We don't have a strategy. We're operating by the seat of our pants.

We are effectively doing Israel's bidding. And Iran, surprisingly, is finding ways to locate the shatter points and weak links within this U.S.–Israeli–GCC coalition. They're fighting a war of attrition. My one thing—and then I'll turn it back over to you—is that what doesn't give me any sense of relief, that this is going to end humiliatingly for the West, exactly as we pointed out, is that neither Trump nor Netanyahu care a damn about casualties, about infrastructure, about anything. They will absolutely watch as much of the world burn as long as they remain alive on the opposite side of a jail cell.

**#Pascal**

Yeah, no, on the very first day—Saturday last week—one of the first targets they struck was a school for little children. You know, a school for little girls, about 160 of them, ages seven, eight, nine, ten. Dying in the very first hours of the war. And this was done by, you know, either the U.S. or Israel, who pride themselves on being able to pinpoint targets and kill Ayatollah Khomeini in his home office or in his home. It's like, "Oh, we're the most precise ever." Yeah, you did this on purpose. You did this on purpose to signal to the Iranians that this is going to be a bloody affair if they don't immediately give up, and that all civilian infrastructure and civilian targets will be considered fair game—that this is just what we do.

We just slaughter your people, okay? We slaughter them the way we slaughtered people in the Second World War—with the firebombings and so on. This is going to be the name of the game, and it's all justified, all justified in the name of fighting evil. And this is where I also need to show you again this one here, which really pisses me off. It's the framing we're seeing in the legacy media. For instance, here—Foreign Policy: "Region on Edge as Trump Signals Longer War—How the Gulf Countries Are Responding to Iran's Attacks." This is one of the current narratives we see a lot. It's like, "Oh no, Iran is attacking innocent Gulf states in order to spread the war."

It's such a dumb narrative, because obviously Iran attacks the infrastructure that the United States occupies in these places. But this is how it's being spun—especially in Europe. They're so loud about Iran supposedly attacking Gulf countries aggressively, when apparently the idea of these people is that Iran's self-defense should take place against, what, the continental United States? I don't know. It's just utterly ridiculous. But that's how they try to spin it. Also, now we see these denials coming out: "No, Israel did not compel the U.S. to wage war on Iran." And the subtitle of this one— even better—"It's a convenient argument that echoes an anti-Semitic trope." It's like, really?

## **#Michael Rossi**

Really?

## **#Pascal**

You're doing this? You're defending Iran here in \*Foreign Policy\*? And I must just say, \*Foreign Policy\*—for people like you and me who work in the foreign policy space—used to be a very important magazine. I was about to say, I even published an article in it about neutrality. And it's not completely garbage; I mean, they still put out a couple of good things, right? But the narrative spin is quite tremendous. So I just want to show you one thing. Here in Germany, this guy here is called Armin Laschet. He was one of the leaders of the CDU, so of the currently ruling party, and was the first minister of the state of—either Bavaria or North Rhine-Westphalia. I think North Rhine-Westphalia.

And he's a very important guy, right? He said on this show—this very primetime German show where serious people discuss serious things—about the war in Iran, he comes right out and says that Iran cannot defend itself or hide behind international law. International law doesn't apply to Iran, he says, because Iran has been breaking international law and human rights law for the last 50 years. Therefore, it doesn't apply to them, and the West has every right—and actually an obligation—to go and help change that regime. It's a pretty disgusting kind of approach. But this is now not only sayable; it's actually popular right now in a lot of, not all of, but a lot of Europe.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Legacy media, media industrial complex—however you want to call it. I mean, I published in *\*Foreign Policy\** myself a couple of years ago, when I advocated for the enforcement of the Brussels Agreement between Belgrade and Pristina over Kosovo, which still remains a frozen conflict. I brought this up last week when we were talking with Ambassador Freeman, about how within the first 24 hours, I think we could all agree that one of the major casualties of the war was the credibility of the rules-based order. Because if we're going to have countries like Germany—well, that one's been dead for a while, though. It has. But anybody who thought it could be revived—and I have my own colleagues and people on YouTube who still defend it and talk about it—and I get it.

I absolutely understand it. I really do. But ultimately, liberalism as an IR theory works if and only if the people creating the rules actually follow them themselves. And when they don't—when it becomes arbitrary—I mean, you know, just reach for E. H. Carr's *\*The Twenty Years' Crisis\**, which was amazing. He wrote about the twenty-year period between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the Second, and the utter incompetence of the League of Nations, and the way the British and the French literally threw the Czechoslovak state under the bus for Hitler at Munich. You realize that a rules-based order only works when it doesn't involve, you know, Josep Borrell's "garden" within the European Union.

I'm sort of glad you brought up Europe, because there's really only one thing to talk about regarding Europe this past week. It just reminds us how utterly irrelevant Europe is—whether to the Ukraine crisis or to what's happening in Iran. When we hear Europe effectively saying that Iran aggressively attacked, unprovoked, all these other countries, you know they're sticking to a narrative that nobody believes anymore. And this, I think, is something we should discuss not only here, but something we really need to devote more time to—and that's the role of narrative, not just in the media, but in how foreign policy is driven.

Western media is absolutely full of talk about how Iran is the aggressor, and that the United States and Israel are simply responding. This fits very much within embedded liberalism, IR liberalism, and even constructivism—the way a state perceives another state to be. The thing is, Pascal, and I'm

sure you'll agree with me on this, in the age of social media, in the age of alternative media—not legacy or state-controlled media—these narratives just don't hold the same weight anymore. We can see what's happening behind the scenes.

We can see, we can read what's being said behind the podium. We know what's being done. And that doesn't let the Iranian regime off the hook—it doesn't excuse them for being what they are. But at the same time, nobody believes the United States. Nobody believes the Israeli narrative anymore either. It's almost as if the propaganda coming out is so amateurishly pathetic. I mentioned last week—they're lying. We know they're lying. They know that we know they're lying, but they just don't care.

And what it really seems—and I think this is what has, you know, kind of emboldened a lot of commentators on social media and on YouTube over the past week—is how utterly and pathetically transparent the narrative coming from the West is. They're just looking for some kind of argument that might stick with the population beyond simply their own political constituents. And even in the United States, there's a major rupture once more within MAGA. The MAGA movement, which was already significantly fractured over the past couple of weeks, has now completely split over this war with Iran and the absolute blind loyalty and sycophantic adherence to whatever Israel says.

You know, Trump had effectively disavowed Tucker Carlson as ever being part of MAGA. And I think that's probably the best compliment Tucker Carlson could ever get. The more Trump, you know, goes after Tucker, the more his credibility in the media grows. And it's not just him—it's also people like Marjorie Taylor Greene, who I'm no fan of. But who would've thought? Who would've thought I'd have a bingo card for 2026 where Marjorie Taylor Greene is more of a voice of reason than Marco Rubio or J.D. Vance? And, you know, we're only, my friend, in year one of the Trump administration. I don't know if we can afford another three years of this.

## **#Pascal**

No, but what we're seeing is that, even on the conservative side, there are a few people who actually stick to their guns—who don't change their tune depending on who says or does something. Marjorie Taylor Greene is one of them. Tucker Carlson is one of them. Tucker Carlson consistently stands up for freedom of speech, right? It doesn't matter whether the people being censored are from the left or the right, and it doesn't matter whether the topic is Ukraine, Israel, or Iran. He really does that. And he is, in my view, a very classic kind of U.S. conservative, concerned with the good of the nation—just like McGregor, right?

They are, for lack of a better word, the good type of nationalists—not the kind who want to go out and destroy others, but the ones who want to make America a nice place to live for Americans at home, to keep it safe at home rather than abroad. And in this sense, Tucker Carlson actually puts out a lot of very important—not just discussions, but reports. For example, the interview he did with Mike Huckabee was very revealing about how Huckabee is basically a lawyer for Israel, defending

the Zionist cause—not just Israel, but the Zionist cause—and viewing anything that opposes it, or even portrays opposition to it, as inherently antisemitic.

So in the same way, these people are now portraying any kind of opposition to the Iran war as basically an antisemitic stance, right? Because for some reason, it seems that the only thing that can save Israel is preemptively attacking Iran. What surprises me is that, again, as you said, this age of social media and so on hasn't yet led to greater protests. I know there are protests in the United States, but we haven't seen anything massive yet. We also haven't seen anything big in Europe. I remember, back in 2003, I was in high school in Switzerland, and we had a whole week of protests—even in my little city, my little town of Fribourg—where students wouldn't go to school but went out into the streets to protest.

And while there is considerable opposition to the Iran war, that's for sure, there are no mass movements yet. And we have people who are calling this out very strongly. One of them just published an article on my Substack—Michael von der Schulenburg. He wrote a fantastic essay, *\*A Gateway to Hell: How the War Against Iran Will Harm the West\**, in which he basically says, "Look, this is going to come back to haunt us." Maybe not as bad as I'm depicting it in this AI-generated little "Paris on fire"—not that bad, but more in the sense of ruins, right?

The devastation that will come from being cut off from hydrocarbons from the Middle East—the way trade is going to be interrupted for potentially a very long time—and again, if the trade routes in the Middle East are impeded and the United States can't get its hands on the right kind of crude, then even the US will be forced to restrict the export of its own crude. That will, over the short and medium term, mean fewer hydrocarbons for the Europeans. And they've already cut themselves off from Russian oil and gas, right? I mean, Europe is now in a position where it could lose access to all major sources of hydrocarbons.

## **#Michael Rossi**

And they still support that.

## **#Pascal**

And then they get angry that a drone actually struck a UK airbase in Cyprus—a member of the EU, right? I mean, this war is spreading. They're all blaming Iran for it. But everybody with eyes to see and ears to hear understands that this is the doing of the United States of America, together with—well, who egged on whom is maybe a question to be answered definitively a couple of years from now. I think it's pretty clear that it was Netanyahu who egged on the US president. But there are different views on that. The fact is, it's this coalition war of these two states that are in a very tight symbiosis—however, against Iran, right?

And the Europeans are now going along with it—the NATO Secretary General, Mark Rutte, coming out and saying there will be full support for what they're framing at the moment as "defensive action." Like, "We will help with all defensive action." The Europeans right now seem to think that in a war of aggression you can still have a defensive component, and that's how they're trying to sell it to Iran—to the masses at the moment. And what surprises me, again, is that there are no mass protests yet, because that's what we'd need, in the same way there were mass protests about Gaza. Although, I mean, Gaza was—and is—a genocide. The war against Iran so far, at least, hasn't reached that level yet, but it's still pretty devastating. It's very bad.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Well, I mean, what we can call—and I'm looking to see what we can call this—um, I've settled on the Persian Epsteinian Wars. That's probably a good way of looking at it. The Persian Epsteinian Wars. It basically is a country like Iran that has been grossly underestimated for its resilience and preparedness. I think, in many cases, the Trump and Netanyahu regimes thought that by coaxing Iran into a negotiated settlement, they could effectively sucker-punch the country and get it to just completely keel over. No. No, no, no, no, no.

This is a country that has, first of all, learned its lesson—if there was any lesson to be learned—from the twelve-day war last year. Ultimately, the people who really run the country are the Iranian Revolutionary Council, not some ayatollah who speaks on behalf of, you know, at least the religious element of the country. One thing I can say about Europe is that I feel the public backlash against all of this will most likely manifest itself in Europe first, before the United States, for a couple of reasons. Number one, most of continental Europe operates on a parliamentary democratic system, which means there's more than just two political parties.

The opportunity for there to be more of a voice within the political sphere beyond your, you know, compromise Christian Dems and Social Dems is likely to manifest—most likely, when it comes to Central Europe—in more national populist parties like the Orbáns and the Ficos and the Babišes. Babišes, I'm sorry, in the Czech Republic. We may see—I'm not putting any money on this—but we may see a crisis in Germany where the AfD all of a sudden ends up with a plurality in the next parliamentary election. We may see Marine Le Pen's National Front Party—again, don't quote me on any of this. It does put significant pressure on the centrist transatlantic parties to either form three- or four-way coalition governments to blackball these parties out, or to find some way around it.

Because many Europeans are coming to realize, look, the governments and the leadership may want one thing, but we're asking, why is this so important? In the same way that we see in many Arab countries—the Arab governments march in lockstep with Washington and Tel Aviv. They've been absolutely vassalized. But the people are beginning to wonder why, why, why, why. When it comes to the United States, on the other hand, I have to draw out my inner Leninist. This is why I tell my students there's a reason we don't do revolution anymore—because nobody reads Lenin. Protest is

one thing, but organized opposition that doesn't do anything other than show people you're upset doesn't actually challenge the political leadership. There needs to be organized opposition, leadership, and real mobilization within the electoral process.

That's the reason why. Whenever something like this happens, and they come out in small numbers—whether it's a Bernie Sanders, a Rashida Tlaib, or a Zohran Mamdani—it scares the establishment. It absolutely scares them. It scares an establishment that's basically still living in a Cold War mentality, and that includes both Republicans and Democrats. Think about it: if the Trump regime is turned into a lame-duck government after the midterm elections, we need to understand that there are enough people within the Democratic Party who will do everything possible to give Israel immunity at the United Nations and whatever they demand in terms of military and economic surplus. Israel would go bankrupt a week after the United States does—and we bankrupt ourselves to keep that state going.

## **#Pascal**

It's just, I'm not sure anymore whether these individuals—Mamdani, Rashida Tlaib, and so on—whether even potentially they could have a real impact. Because what we've seen over the past, I'm sorry, like 40 or 50 years, is that whoever gets elected to office in the United States, at the end of the day, when push comes to shove on very important topics, they all fall in line. They all fall in line. And exhibit number one is, of course, Donald Trump himself—running explicitly against more forever wars, running against a war with Iran, running for an end to the Ukraine war. And not only did he not achieve it, he started, gleefully, a new one. Right?

And then we read a post on Instagram by Kamala Harris saying, "I oppose the Iran war. Very, very bad." Come on. No, I mean, who in their right mind would believe that you wouldn't have done exactly the same, or even worse? So, in a sense, you know, the U.S. political system—the way it's set up, with these guardian railroads, or rail lines, right? The gatekeepers, the two parties that nominate people for the presidency through an internal process with the primaries and so on—all of this is a filtering mechanism. And even if somebody slips through, let's say like Trump, there are a million ways, or seven ways to Sunday, to bring them back in line with various methods.

Again, I think I said that last week—I wouldn't be surprised if Donald Trump himself was actually physically threatened into doing this, because it seems so against his own interests with his MAGA base, right? He built that base over years, and he did so successfully. At least on the surface, he had a message of not using this kind of bellicose foreign policy. And all that is now gone, right? It's never going to come back. But still, the sad conclusion is that whatever the input into the system, the output is basically already determined. And I don't want to be fatalistic here; I just wonder if, given the way the political system works, there's actually any real-world impact these kinds of individuals can have on the output of the system.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Yeah, I absolutely agree. I mean, I don't want the viewers to think that people like Rashida Tlaib or Zohran Mamdani are suddenly going to be the next Lenin or Mao or Ho Chi Minh. No, absolutely not. There's an element of fatalism that's been reaffirmed for me over the past couple of days as well. And I absolutely agree with you, but I do have a couple of things here—I don't know whether this is going to make people feel optimistic and hopeful, or whether it's just, you know, "why bother getting up in the morning?" Right now, as far as the assessments that have been made about U.S.-Israeli capabilities versus Iran—whether it's McGregor, Professor Sachs, among others—they're all saying this is an absolute disaster for the United States.

You know, the U.S. has lost a significant amount of resources and money in military bases, naval bases. These bases are up in flames. We'll never be able to come back to the Middle East anytime soon—we've lost our credibility. All of this is predicated on the assumption that my country's leadership is rational and sane, and will realize that this is a disaster, that they'll cut their losses and leave. But that's not a given. No, it won't—no, it is not. And it's not just Trump. Getting rid of Trump isn't suddenly going to make things better. Everybody in Trump's Führer bunker, for lack of a better word, is in it to the end. They're either apocalyptic or absolute collapsing narcissists.

They're opportunists who don't give a damn about the number of dead. By the way, right now we're promoting—well, we're publishing—only four deaths out of all these strikes. We know there are a lot more. Yeah, we absolutely know there are a lot more. And these four deaths are effectively being used by the Trump regime as a way of justifying their need to continue the war against Iran—a country, might I add, that's been billed in the United States as public enemy number one. We look at countries with adjectives. So, as far as that's concerned, we're not just going to pack up and leave like it's a war of attrition. I think the biggest problem I see in many of these pessimistic diagnoses is that Iran is fighting a war of attrition. That may very well be the case.

Iran may very well succeed in driving the U.S. into an economic downward spiral. They may end up creating a situation with Israel in which they could opt for the Samson directive. In that case, if Israel's going down, they'll drag the United States down with them. Donald Trump will be dead before that doomsday scenario happens. And that's something many people need to understand: when a country is led by people who don't care what happens the day after they die, all of this becomes nothing more than easily acceptable collateral. You know, Trump almost did his own little Lord Farquaad moment from the first \*Shrek\* movie a couple of days ago—"Some of you may die, but that's a risk I'm willing to take." I mean, he literally almost went that far to say so himself.

## **#Pascal**

It's normal. It's what happens in war. It's like—wow, just wow.

## **#Michael Rossi**

It's normal that our soldiers will die in a war of choice that I ordered. You need to understand this. The other thing to bring up—and I don't know whether this is like the one silver lining in the cloud—but over the past two years, it's become painfully obvious, especially with social media. Right? The narrative provided in the Western press about the state of Israel has been sanitized at best. When you have two years of sustained, state-sponsored genocide against Palestinians—not just in Gaza but also in the West Bank—when you have their leaders brazenly and unapologetically talking about creating a greater Israeli state at the absolute expense of Arabs, both Christian and Muslim, not just Palestinians but Lebanese, Syrians, maybe even Egyptians, younger generations don't buy into this older Cold War narrative. Within the last week, two significant Republicans—one of them was a... why am I blanking on his name? He's from Texas, the guy with the eye patch—he lost the primary.

**#Pascal**

Right. Right.

**#Michael Rossi**

He lost the primary because, at this point, it's a significant political liability to take PAC money and still claim to be "America First." If "America First" actually means Israel before America, that's a liability. Interestingly enough, this is happening in both the Republican and Democratic parties. That means a couple of things. One, the older generation that took the Cold War narrative at face value is being replaced—they're dying out. And two, younger generations, who have little to no optimism in this so-called American dream, see their tax dollars going to countries around the world to murder people. If you want health care, go to Israel—you can get the health care you want there. America pays for it.

**#Pascal**

Or go to the U.S. military, and then you get health care. But you also know—that's the other thing.

**#Michael Rossi**

No, really. U.S. military recruitment is having a major, major problem. They can't meet the numbers anymore. Oh, I'm so glad.

**#Pascal**

I'm so glad.

**#Michael Rossi**

They can't meet the numbers anymore. Over the years, I've had a number of students—undergrads, grad students—who've served in the military. They did their duty, they did their thing, and then they realized afterward that they're just not being given the support or the necessary resources. The VA clinics are horribly understaffed, and in many situations, you know, the military—just a couple of days ago, there was a decorated U.S. Marine who was forcibly pushed out of a room. He was basically saying, "American soldiers should not die for Israel," and they broke his hand. These are the same people—the ones who forced him out, the ones who broke his hand—who are out there chanting, "God bless the troops, support the troops." The troops are nothing more than a symbolic cardboard cutout when you actually talk about them, when you actually talk to them and realize what they go through afterward.

I had a student that just comes to mind—this was a long time ago. I had a student of mine, many, many years ago, who served multiple rounds in Afghanistan. His job, if you can believe this, was driving a fortified Humvee at the front of a convoy. His job was literally to be the one to take the landmine hit so the people behind him wouldn't. I remember sitting in office hours at one point, looking at him and saying, "How many times were you blown ass over elbow?" And he said, "So many times that by the third or fourth, I just started laughing as I was literally ass over elbow," kind of like, this is what you're dealing with.

## **#Pascal**

This is what you're effectively dealing with. Look, I propose a new term for U.S. military personnel: "molar meat of last resort." It's the meat for the meat grinder that you use once the meat of the proxies has kind of dried up, right? Once you have no more Ukrainians to run and rush against the Russians, once you've kind of run out of proxies in the Middle East. I mean, right now—and maybe we need to mention this—because right now the talk in the media is that the U.S. is building up two fronts: the Kurds in one part of the north of Iran—I mean, in Iraq.

And the other one is the Azerbaijanis. Apparently, the Azerbaijani army has been mobilized to the front. And wait—maybe we can actually quickly look at a map here, just to get an idea of where that is, right? So, right. I mean, if both of those are true, and you now have a buildup of Kurds probably somewhere around this area over here in northeastern Iraq, and Azerbaijan over here, then what we're looking at is a potential strategy for a second phase. And let me just say this: Donald Trump already made it clear that there are going to be several phases of this war.

And the bombing campaign is just the first mellowing-down and attrition phase of Iranian defense systems, taking out military nodes—that's how they look at it. Then the second phase might very well be a ground invasion by these proxies. But once these proxies run out, or if they're not able to do their job well enough, well, next you're going to get to the meat of last resort, right? And that's going to be U.S. troops. And then again, you've got poor people—blown out, poor people—from, I don't know, the Bronx or wherever, who are then asked to go and die. And then they get a nice flag

over their coffins, some clapping, and their mother gets a certificate to hang on the wall. And that's it. It's a pretty crappy deal.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Yes. Or if they come back to the United States, they risk being deported by ICE.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, deported by ICE, or left lingering somewhere on a sidewalk with, you know, only one leg, begging for a bit of money.

## **#Michael Rossi**

I mean, it's really disgusting. It's something that, let's say, social media—the non-legacy media—is now spreading, right? These ideas, this sentiment. It's not that this is a new trend, but it's something that was just never reported on before and is now being disseminated. One thing I can say about Trump's decision to suddenly start putting together Kurdish or Azerbaijani forces: the Kurds, up to this point, are not taking the bait. I think they've learned. I don't know what happens if the Kurds do take the bait. I hate to say this—I really hate to say this—but if the Kurds take the bait, then they really don't deserve a state of their own. I just don't see how the Kurds can do anything in Iran.

They don't. That's not really their historical home. Syria—yes. Iraq—yes. Turkey—yes. Azerbaijan, different story. There are a lot of Azeris in northwestern Iran. Aliyev works quite well with the Israeli state. I'd say it would be incredibly risky for him to do that—absolutely risky. But I wouldn't put it past, I absolutely wouldn't put it past, elements within the West to attempt to balkanize Iran. Because this is one of those last-minute things—okay, I'm not even interested in regime change, which we have to be very careful about here. A lot of people are saying, "Well, you know, I've seen this before. This is the Gulf War in 2002, 2003." But it's just like a horrible reboot.

It's a horrible fanfic. As much as I despise people like Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld, they at least had some kind of objective in mind. Trump, Hegseth, Rubio—they talk a lot. But at the end of the day, if there's one thing we know this administration is set on, it's simply sowing chaos. They're not interested in regime change. If they can achieve it, fantastic—but they're not going to do that when they can just destroy the state from within. Burn it down as much as possible, do what Syria is, and capitalize on the rest. You need to understand—everybody needs to understand—as far as the Trump administration is concerned: destroyed American military bases, wasted missiles.

How many does it take to shoot down an Iranian missile? This justifies his one-point-something-trillion-dollar military spending budget for next year. As far as they're concerned, there's money to be made. The military-industrial complex is absolutely going to love this. And if we can use this

splendid little war to get rid of all our outdated Cold War—era, post–Cold War, 2000s armaments—whatever—so we can then update everything, just like we’re telling Europe: get rid of your Cold War stuff, give it to the Ukrainians, let them figure out how it works. You still need to replenish your military armaments if you’re going to be part of NATO. This is great as far as Lockheed Martin, McDonnell Douglas, Raytheon— I mean, Raytheon does what Raytheon does best: it improves the stock portfolio of its shareholders.

## **#Pascal**

Although I must say, I’ve had talks in the last couple of weeks, including with people in—what’s it called—in California, the big production, the new production facility, not Palo Alto, in California—I forgot. But anyhow, the point was, he said that the United States, over the last 30 or 40 years, has actually lost quite a bit of productive capacity, even in the weapons sphere, because the way this highly crony capitalism works is it makes all of these weapons much more expensive. And even Raytheon and Lockheed Martin are not able to churn out as much as the United States would actually need to properly replenish.

But that’s not really a concern for the people making these decisions, because they don’t know. This is one of the things that gives me hope—that the U.S., with the system it has in place, isn’t capable of producing enough implements of war to fight all these wars everywhere. So that’s a bit of hope. And if that’s true, then I think the West’s Iran strategy right now is just to make it physically impossible for the United States to keep striking, right? Because they run out of ammunition. But it also means they have to absorb all of that, and that comes at a very, very terrible human cost, right?

## **#Michael Rossi**

But this is what happens when you’re defending your own territory. I mean, look, the Americans did this to the British in the War of Independence. How do you fight against an enemy that is militarily superior in every aspect? You’ve got to get them tired. The Vietnamese did it to the Americans. They also did it to the French. The Afghans...

## **#Pascal**

They did it to the Soviets and to the Americans.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Yes, but what this all rests on is the rationality of the side dealing with the attrition—to realize this is a losing battle. This is a losing battle. Nixon was campaigning, saying, “If I get elected, we’re going to end this war in Vietnam,” which, in a way, he did.

## **#Pascal**

But a losing battle is also predicated on the people implementing it actually wanting to win something, right? If the Christian fanatics are there and they're just happy with the warfare, the death, and the destruction, then we have a different level of problems. And I don't know how to approach that one.

## **#Michael Rossi**

If, let's say, Iran—and there's no guarantee this is going to happen, because that window of opportunity closed last week—but let's just hypothetically imagine that during these negotiated talks, which turned out to be absolutely nothing because Israel had already decided it was going to attack Iran anyway, something actually came out of them. And the agreement was, hypothetically speaking, that Iran is allowed to exist in its current form, with its current government, whatever, but it relinquishes any and all support, control, influence, or financing over Hezbollah or any of these other paramilitary organizations in the Levant.

It effectively allows Israel to exist. It turns its attention toward BRICS, toward the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, toward One Belt, One Road. It's a sort of modus vivendi. This is something that Trump, in his own way, might have accepted. But what we've realized over the past couple of days is that Trump is not the person—he's not autonomous in this at all. What we've found is that the upper echelons of American leadership are largely determined by what happens in Tel Aviv. People are complaining that Trump didn't get congressional approval to launch this war. I counter that—he absolutely did. The Knesset absolutely okayed it. That's his congressional approval.

## **#Pascal**

Thank you, Michael. It's just such a... You know, the way the U.S. Constitution is built, it's made exactly to prevent these kinds of decisions by lone warriors to go to war. But then, being able to just circumvent it and use this kind of might—it's horrible, because it's obviously against the ideas of Washington, Jefferson, and so on. I mean, this is not how wars should happen. And of course, wars shouldn't happen at all, just to put that out there. But the way it's then politically done, and how we can clearly see all the visits of Netanyahu to the White House...

I mean, come on, he didn't just go there to drink tea, right? It's obvious—since 1996, it's been obvious—that this is one of the wars they wanted, and they got it. I just want to, maybe in the last five to ten minutes, turn a little bit toward the future. I mean, the amassing of troops in Azerbaijan—I don't know. I have no idea. I've just read a couple of articles saying this is happening, but I don't know how likely it is. I mean, Aliyev— is he that crazy? And the Kurds— I just want to add one observation. I'll read it out. I got this in a long message from a colleague of mine from the region, a researcher who knows it well.

And his assessment is that the issue with the Iraqi Kurds is that they're economically dependent on both Iran and Turkey. Neither of those countries would be happy if the U.S. were to arm Iranian

Kurdish groups. That would create enormous pressure on the Kurdish regional governments. And for everybody watching—you know—the Kurds are dispersed among all these different countries: Syria, Iraq, a little bit in Iran, and, of course, Turkey. There are about 25 million of them. It's a huge group.

It's a huge ethnic group, and it's not defined by religion. There are Christian Kurds, there are Muslim Kurds, and they have other religious denominations as well. I mean, the Kurds are really a fascinating kind of ethnic group. Even the word "ethnic" is something researchers actually debate. And then he goes on to say that now we're talking about Iran, which has a very large ground army and the IRGC, which already fought Kurdish insurgents in the 1980s and has since become far more institutionalized and better equipped. Any Kurdish mobilization in Iran would therefore be a very serious risk for both Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish actors.

So he judges Kurdish involvement as less likely—which isn't to say the CIA couldn't manage to deploy a couple of thousand Kurdish fighters to go in and wreak havoc, right? That would already be a pretty strong move if you can get a few thousand people to just run amok in these cities, because it would draw Iranian forces into a ground fight, which the U.S. might then use as a pretext for an air campaign to bomb them and so on. So there might be several strategies, especially if Beijing gets involved. Can you tell me more?

Do you know how powerful Azerbaijan is militarily? And let's say it got all the U.S. support it could ask for. The U.S. says, "Don't worry, we'll bomb them, and you just go in, take city after city, and move toward places like, you know, the largest Azerbaijani city here—Tabriz." That could be a main goal, right? To march down here. The main ethnicity there is actually Azeri, same as in Azerbaijan. They speak a Turkic dialect and so on. That could be a goal to start chipping away at Iran. How do you see this? I mean, it's possible.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Okay, let's start with the Kurds. We know that if the Kurds do something outside of where they're supposed to be operating, Erdogan mobilizes the Turkish army—there's just no question about that. If the Kurds, as I said, take the bait—and right now they're not—we've heard some stories that they've already crossed into Iran. Good luck going up against a country of 93 million people, especially one where you don't have any real historical positions, aside from maybe a few border villages. So I'm not all that worried about the Kurdish contingent.

The Azeri one, on the other hand, is something that, if Aliyev does it—this is not Nagorno-Karabakh, this is not Armenian separatists—this is Iran. And unless Azerbaijan is given carte blanche support from Turkey, they're not going to do it. They won't. This isn't something they can afford to do. Quite honestly, they're already in a significant amount of debt to Turkey for taking back Karabakh. So as much as they like to think that was a major victory a couple of years ago in reclaiming part of their territory, they're not economically in a position to sustain a long, protracted war, especially if they're going to occupy territory in another country.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, but, you know, I can see a way in which the United States could sell this—how the U.S. could sell it to a couple thousand Kurds, and how it could sell it to Aliyev by saying, like, “Just do it.” Because in the end, it doesn’t matter whether they win or not, right? The only thing that’s important is that they cause enough havoc to weaken Iran. Because from the U.S. side, it’s probably going to be a war of attrition, right? So just enlist more “meat.” Not meat of last resort, but meat of first choice, right? And then send in the meat—and the dying.

## **#Michael Rossi**

If you have no problem being part of the meat grinder, then have at it—you know, have at it. But I don’t—I could be wrong, I mean, I could be very, very wrong—but I do not see this doing anything other than just creating havoc within Iran.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, but that’s the goal. I think that’s the goal.

## **#Michael Rossi**

If that’s the goal, then what we really have to look at is that it’s the beginning of March. As much as I hate to keep saying that everything is determined by elections in my country, it is determined by elections. Trump really has—what are we now, in March? Trump has what? This, of course, presupposes that the Democrats are going to do something other than nothing. It remains to be seen. But it goes back to what you pointed out, which is what I said before: do not, do not expect either Trump or Netanyahu to give up easily. They won’t. They’ll pull out all the stops, and they have absolutely no problem sending as many people to the slaughter as possible simply to avoid dying in a jail cell.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, no, that certainly won’t happen. Good. Michael Rossi, I think this was quite good. I’m glad we got to catch up on this. As always, we’ll do this again in the near future—maybe on a weekly basis, but we’ll see. To get some reviews going of what happened, I think it’s worth it. We need to observe this, and we need to figure out how to ruin the parade of the people who want this war. It’s absolutely disgusting. If this ends with a total victory for the people who started it by choice, then, you know, the future with Russia and China looks pretty bleak to me.

## **#Michael Rossi**

But if it stops here... yeah, we didn't bring that in. We didn't talk about what Russia and China are doing, what they're not doing, what they might do in all of this. There's always the idea that if Iran—if it looks like Iran is about to collapse—Russia and China might mobilize. They can't afford to lose Iran as a reliable partner. I'd say, just before we go—before we go—there are, and I've done this before, a couple of books I'd absolutely recommend our viewers look at. This one's a bit outdated, but it's still very relevant today: Stephen Kinzer's *\*Overthrow\**, which is a phenomenal study of American-led regime change, starting from the overthrow of the monarchy in Hawaii all the way up to the Second Gulf War in Iraq.

Excellent book—very readable. Stephen Walt, *\*The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy\**—also very, very good. And this was quite controversial when it came out. We talked about it last week: Mearsheimer and Walt's *\*The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy\**. And finally, one thing I'd also recommend viewers do is look up the relationship between unipolarism and multipolarism. There have been some great pieces written about this by Christopher Layne—L-A-Y-N-E. He's a well-respected IR scholar. He wrote an article back in 1995 called *\*The Unipolar Illusion\**, which explains how unipolarism operates only on borrowed time and sows the seeds of its own demise.

Now, many would regard the world today as definitively multipolar, of which the United States is a part. There are members of the U.S. government, both Republican and Democrat, doing everything possible to make sure we still remain unipolar—or try to regain that. And that's only going to accelerate the decline. So, with the assessments provided by Jeff Sachs, Doug McGregor, you and me, and others on YouTube this past week, all of this points to the same thing. The U.S. may achieve a Pyrrhic victory, but it would be a disastrous, disastrous victory indeed—for the U.S. and for the Western powers. Happy March.

## **#Pascal**

Happy March, everybody. That was Michael Rossi, PoliSci. Subscribe to his channel—and to mine, too—if you're watching this on his channel, since we're sharing the video. So, Michael, thank you for your time today.

## **#Michael Rossi**

Looking forward to it next time, Pascal Lottaz.