

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson: US–Israel War on Iran Could Go Nuclear

Former Pentagon official Col. Lawrence Wilkerson breaks down the escalating US–Israel war on Iran — and why it could spiral into a global catastrophe. Support Independent media to remain bold: <https://patreon.com/IndiaGlobalLeft> Link for donation: <https://paypal.me/sankymudiar> In this explosive interview, Wilkerson analyzes the assassination of key Iranian leaders, the fractures within the Trump-era political coalition, and the growing divide inside the MAGA movement over endless wars. He also explains how military Keynesianism is failing, with rising inflation, economic strain, and massive spending on defense systems struggling against low-cost Iranian drone warfare. Most alarmingly, Wilkerson warns about the real possibility of nuclear weapons being used, raising urgent questions about whether the US can restrain Israel under mounting pressure. Key Topics Covered Assassination of Iran’s top security leadership Joe Kent’s resignation & US domestic power struggles MAGA divide on war & empire US economic crisis & military spending Iran’s drone warfare vs US defense systems Risk of nuclear escalation Why This Matters This is not just another conflict. As Wilkerson explains, this war reflects deep structural crises inside the US empire — politically, economically, and militarily. Subscribe for more critical global analysis Stay updated with interviews featuring leading voices on geopolitics, imperialism, and global resistance. Follow us on Substack: <https://substack.com/@indiagloballeft> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Indiagloballeft> Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/indiagloballeft/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559411353392> Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/69Y9iCWUv8ha3ATsPWtWk0?si=ee1f0de3de094f17> Telegram: <https://t.me/+WNlqoiv1Rhg5NjEx>

#Mudiar

Hello and welcome to another episode of *India and Global Left*. If you’re new to our show, consider subscribing. You can also support our channel by becoming a YouTube member, a patron, or by donating a small amount through the link in the description box. Without further ado, let me welcome our guest tonight, Lawrence Wilkerson. Colonel Wilkerson is a retired U.S. Army colonel and former Chief of Staff to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. Colonel Wilkerson, welcome back to *India and Global Left*.

#Lawrence

Thank you for having me. It’s always good to speak to a billion-plus people. Thank you.

#Mudiar

We have a lot of viewership both inside and outside India, so yeah, it's still a billion plus. Anyway, I wanted to start by asking you about your thoughts on the significance of the recent assassination of Dr. Ali Larijani, Iran's leader, Chief of the Supreme National Security Council, and also Ghulam Raza Soleimani, the Basij commander. Of course, the mainstream media has been presenting it as if it's a profound victory for Israel, as if it has tilted the war decisively to one side. Iran, of course, says that it's been a big loss. Nevertheless, the big trends of the war would remain unaffected. If you could tell our viewers about the significance of these assassinations.

#Lawrence

I have no real idea of the significance in terms of being immersed in Iranian culture or leadership, but I can give some general thoughts—and I think they're very important general thoughts. One, Bibi Netanyahu in particular, but Israel in general, seems to think that assassinating people, especially those in the limelight, in the headlines, or leaders in some respect, is a good thing. My experience over fifty-some years—thirty-one in the U.S. military—is that assassinating people, first of all, is a war crime, and second, it often gets you something worse than what you had before, rather than better.

A case in point that I could elaborate on ad nauseam is Hassan Nasrallah, who was as much a politician as he was a leader of a terrorist group. And I don't even call Hezbollah a terrorist group, because they're fighting against people they have every reason and right to fight against. So that's the first point I'd make. The second point I'd make is that we've done the same thing, learning from Israel. And it's proven, at best, a comfort for a president, and at worst—and in most cases—a disaster. Case in point: when we took out bin Laden. Guess who came in and took control of al-Qaeda? One of the most bloody-minded people—the number two guy, Zawahiri.

And had he endured in that, I think his bloody-mindedness sort of shortened his time. But there's no question in my mind that he would have been much worse than bin Laden, who, after all, did have a kind of positive side to him, if you will, in terms of his ethereal thinking and philosophizing and so forth. I'm not trying to excuse what Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Zawahiri, and bin Laden did on 9/11, but I can understand it—whereas Zawahiri was an Egyptian who was just mad at the world and wanted to kill people. That was not a good move to make him the leader of al-Qaeda. Now, you could say the United States didn't have any choice.

They had finally located bin Laden, and they had to take him out, even if he was in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and so on. I'm not even sure we did the right thing by not making him a martyr—by dumping his body at sea, if indeed that's what we did. I don't have any proof that we actually got bin Laden and disposed of him. I suspect we did, but I don't have any proof of it. No proof was ever offered. So, all that to say, assassinating people might make you feel good—like it does with Bibi—and it might give you something to throw out to your electorate, because the Israelis seem to like it too. But I don't think it's a very smart thing to do.

And then the third reason is that the people they assassinated were not really important. In my view—my view of who is important right now in the IRGC, in the security complex in general, and in Iran in particular—they weren't all that important, particularly Larijani, because he was sort of working his way toward being a persona non grata, even in Iran. So all of that is just to say I think it's stupid. I think it's a dumb practice. If you get them in the course of a war—that is to say, they die because they're defending their country or they happen to be under a bomb or something like that—that's different. But to go after them, to assassinate them, and make that a modus operandi of your military, frankly, is sickening and cowardly.

#Mudiar

These are also war crimes. Yes. I wanted to ask you about the head of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, Joe Kent, resigning in opposition to the war. How significant is that for the domestic dynamics of the United States, and what does it reflect or tell us about the current administration?

#Lawrence

I think it tells a great deal. I'm not here to defend Kent. I mean, if you look at his previous career, he's a reprehensible individual as far as I'm concerned—some of the things he said and some of the things he did, both in and out of the military. So I'm not defending him in any way, but I love the fact—I relish the fact—that he apparently had an epiphany, essentially driven by the fact that Trump has gone mad, insane. And I do mean that seriously. I don't think the president is in full possession of his human faculties anymore, if he ever was. But I certainly don't think he is now. So Kent has put an arrow in Trump's heart with regard to his following, just as the assassination of Charlie Kirk did. Because there are many people in MAGA I still talk to and have conversations with, and they are very much of a mind that Israel was behind Charlie Kirk's assassination—and I suspect that's a valid assumption on their part.

Whether it was direct or indirect is yet to be determined—if ever—like JFK's assassination, for example, in which I believe Israel was involved. We'll probably never know the true answer, but it is creating cracks in the carapace that is MAGA. And anything that creates cracks there, in my view, is positive. Kent's resignation, and particularly the way he couched his letter, did that. One paragraph that really got me—because I just lost my wife of 55 years, and I know what a blow it was to me—was not the penultimate, but the next-to-penultimate paragraph, I guess. He actually brought his wife into it, and how she had died. And I can appreciate that. That's an element of humanity I didn't expect from him.

#Mudiar

And this also reflects a kind of division within the administration.

#Lawrence

Very much so. Yes, yes. Hopefully it spreads. I was hoping—I was praying, even—that Tulsi Gabbard would dive into that divide and widen it even further, even at the cost of her job. She just gave a recently reported interview that makes me sick. It makes me ill because I teach what she was talking about. What she said in the statement that was reported in the press—and I suspect it's accurate—was essentially that Donald Trump was elected by the American people, therefore he has the right, and the implication is strong that he has the right—meaning Donald J. Trump—to make war decisions, be they right, wrong, indifferent, or whatever. That is not true. Tulsi has not studied the 1947 National Security Act as I have, until I'm sick of it.

She has not studied the reasons for that act. She has not studied what has happened with that act since then. The reason Congress passed the 1947 National Security Act—the primary reason; there were other ancillary reasons, but the primary one—was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Four years. Four years. Four years. And possibly another four years. They even amended the Constitution to take care of that, but they were very, very worried about how he had disregarded counsel and advice, and made decisions almost by himself. He even pushed his Secretary of State out of it. I mean, he never took—look at all the pictures of the war conferences—the Secretary of State is never there.

Longest-serving, I think, Secretary of State in the history of the position—but he's never there. Marshall's there in uniform. Churchill often was there in uniform because he was an American. Oh, he wasn't? Think about that for a minute. So they were really alarmed at FDR's consolidation of presidential decision-making power, particularly over war issues—in his heart, in his brain, in his soul—consulting with no one. That's why they wrote the act. The primary reason they wrote the act. The act, statutorily—that is, by law—specifies how national security decisions are to be made. Okay, Tulsi, Trump has ignored that law completely. He does not use it to make decisions.

Trump is a reversion to FDR without the brains. He's making the decisions by himself. Sometimes he talks to Hegseth. Sometimes he talks to Rubio. Sometimes he talks to Scott Besson, but not very often. Sometimes he takes advice, sometimes he doesn't—but not very often. And I'll tell you what: he does not use, and everyone now knows, the statutory process at all. So he's violating the law—technically speaking, and what I would call nationally speaking, legally—in terms of Congress having passed the law, every time he makes a decision. He's making decisions in the national security realm completely against the law, and he's making war decisions on wars of choice, like Iran, in his own head.

Not to say that he doesn't have a cheerleading team like Cade, Seth, and Rubio, and perhaps others, but he's not using the statutory system. So he's violating the law. The very first thing I would bring up when Congress impeaches him—which inevitably they will—is that issue: you have violated the 1947 Act and all amendments thereto, which is statutory. It's this body's act about how decision-making is done with regard to war. And we're impeaching him for it. There could be other reasons, too. But Tulsi Gabbard is totally wrong in her defense of Donald Trump. And then, even more

pathetic, you read in that defense that she's trying to keep her job, even though she knows this war is wrong. She's trying to keep her job. So she is a low-life individual in my view now.

#Mudiar

The impeachment, as I understand it, would depend on the Republican Party's congressmen and women, and probably also on the election results—but ultimately on how many within the Republican Party vote. Because there's a large chunk of them who've completely given in to sycophancy, believing that everything Donald Trump does is correct. So I wanted to ask you about the party, as well as those within the MAGA movement that you speak to or have spoken to, because there seems to be a great divide within that as well. There are apparently segments of people within MAGA for whom Trump is the end-all, be-all. And there seem to be some who still question U.S. empire, needless wars, and so on. So if you could spell out a little bit about your experience speaking with people on the MAGA side.

#Lawrence

I find that there are a number of schisms developing. The most prominent one a few months ago, of course, was the assassination of Charlie Kirk. Now, I'm not defending Charlie Kirk, because if you go back and look at some of his language and some of his meetings, he was pretty raw too. I wouldn't call him a white supremacist, but he came very close to being one in many respects. He mellowed a bit as he approached the period when he began to question Israel and the relationship the United States had with Israel. But all that aside for a moment, his assassination—and the way it's connected in the minds of many—I find that to still be the biggest issue separating them from Trump.

He was trying to get people to realize that the association with Israel was too close—that it was damaging. I think that's the reason they had him assassinated, regardless of whether the Israelis were involved or not. And I, for one, think they were. That started it. But now other issues have come into play. One of them is financial—physical, if you will. They're looking at the money that's being spent, and the money that's being spent on things that even they can see aren't impactful on their lives, or are even negative for their lives. And one of the things looming large in that respect, and I think doing a lot more damage, is the price of gas at the pump right now.

Because I got a photo of a gas pump in Los Angeles that was \$8.97 or something like that per gallon. Of course, a lot of that is California's taxes and fees, but it's still going up all across the country. I remember the Arab oil embargo—being in line at a filling station, a service station, with 40 or 50 cars, and then finally getting to the pumps and finding all the fuel gone. You had to sit there and wait for a truck to arrive and bring more fuel. We're going to have that again in this country if this war continues and Iran is reasonably successful.

Yesterday, I saw that Russia is—and this comes from a group I consult with every week about oil, an international oil group—making roughly \$150 million a day right now, in addition to what it would

have been making, just because of the rise that's taken place since this war of sorts started. Another reason I think MAGA is having trouble is the war itself, because many of them—those I still talk with, or who still talk with me—are in the Republican Party and vote that way. They say, "This doesn't make any sense," and they say, "It's only Israel that did this." And that goes back to Kirk, too. This is Israel. Trump was caught in a trap.

Netanyahu caught him in that trap. They have different versions of it, but basically they think Israel pulled us into this war, that Trump was reluctant. And then you also have the people who don't think Trump was reluctant, who go back and quote his previous statements about the Middle East in particular, and don't like the fact that he said anything. These are crazy, stupid, idiotic wars—referring to Iran, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, and a host of other places. And now he's doing it. He's not only doing it, he's doing it bigger than anyone else. He may have the entire American military establishment committed to this before it's through. And as one said to me yesterday, he doesn't seem to care.

He doesn't seem to care that he may be sending the entire establishment before it's over. I don't know if you're aware of this, but the Ford—our big aircraft carrier that's been having problems—has spent more time at sea than any carrier since Vietnam, and more than that, as I understand it. The Ford left the Mediterranean, not coming back to port or anything for the young men and women on the ship, going down through the Suez and through the Red Sea. And now she's not making any headway because they had a fire. I'm sure they've got the fire out and she's underway again, but the speculation is the fire was probably started by the crew.

Because the crew apparently gave her big problems when she came into the Med by clogging up the sewer system, she had to make port so they could dump it and people could use the bathrooms. You can't make this stuff up. So if it's the crew again—if the crew is that angry—then the Ford's not going to make it anywhere successfully, because you've got, you know, about 5,000 men and women on that ship, and apparently quite a few of them are deeply grieved, irritated, and aggravated by this extended period at sea. So you have all kinds of things like that getting back to Americans, too. They don't like that. They basically are supporters of the troops.

They love Lee Greenwood and, you know, "I'm proud to be an American," all that stuff. And they are, in effect, disturbed—and they should be. So there are many things affecting MAGA right now, at its very core. Now, the people who flock to ICE—the people who kill people in Minnesota, for example—the crust of ICE, particularly the leadership and the level right below that, they're bloodthirsty tyrants. And they made sure they hired those kinds of people in order to do this. They're the same people they hired, for example, to be the security element of the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. In Gaza, they were helping the IDF kill Gazans who were hungry, thirsty, and just coming to eat or drink.

That's how rough these people are. They even put a motorcycle gang member in charge of the security element from our Pacific Northwest—someone who was photographed wearing sweatshirts

and gear on his motorcycle that said "Death to all Muslims." They put this guy in charge of it. So that's your ICE component. Not all of them, of course, but that's the leading edge of the ICE component. And they're the brownshirts for the Trump administration, mainly for Stephen Miller. They are the brownshirts for the Reinhard Heydrich of the Trump administration—Stephen Miller. And I mean that. He is Reinhard Heydrich reincarnated—you know, Heydrich of the Final Solution, Hitler's death man. That's who Stephen Miller is. That's falling apart to a certain extent too.

So I expect that if we approach the midterms and they're actually conducted, and nothing tremendously nefarious is done by the Republicans, they're going to lose dramatically. And when that happens, you're going to see Congress take on a new tone and tint. It's going to stop being cowardly. It's going to have a significant Republican complement—think Thomas Massie multiplied. And it's going to have people like Mike Lee from Utah, for example, if he manages to survive, who are very well educated in the war powers and in war in general with regard to the Constitution, who will stand up again, I think. In fact, Mike Lee is standing up a bit even now in the Senate, and being counted. So you're going to have the Republicans essentially thrown out on their heads from both houses of Congress.

How big a majority the Democrats will have, and how effective it will be with a lot of new people, is yet to be seen. And it's yet to be seen, too, if this trend of Republicans and Democrats leaving Congress because they're disgusted continues. You've had dozens of people actually say, "I'm out of here. I'm leaving." Some of them fairly long-term, but most of them young people—most of them one or two terms—and leaving because they're disgusted with what they found when they came to Washington. All of this is going to come to a head with and around the midterms. And I think by that time, this war will have convinced far more of MAGA that their trust and faith in Donald Trump is deeply misplaced.

#Mudiar

And these political problems or issues are not the only ones. I mean, the U.S. is also facing massive economic and military problems as it conducts these wars. This is something I've been thinking about. We're doing a full show online on the 22nd with John Bellamy Foster, editor of **Monthly Review**, and Professor Prabhat Patnaik on this very significant question of military Keynesianism—which is that, in the past, the U.S. war machine, every time it participated in wars, of course there were problems, but in terms of employment creation, it used to counter stagnation and slower economic growth.

They started with the Second World War, and it continued. Of course, there were moments during Lyndon Johnson's time and others when they were facing rising fiscal deficits and so on, with domestic spending. And also, toward the late '60s, there was a drain on foreign reserves and so on. But on the whole, the war machine was used effectively to generate full employment, or at least move toward it. Now we're seeing something exactly the opposite. There's an inflationary situation because of the war, as you mentioned—the pumps—but these aren't just limited to the pumps.

We're seeing fertilizer scarcity in the U.S. and elsewhere, and these are seasons when farmers are planting soybeans and corn. U.S. farming has been under stress for a very long time, thanks to Trump's tariffs, and it's gotten even worse. So all this is to say that the typical analysis of military Keynesianism doesn't really apply anymore. If you see more unemployment, more inflation, more contraction, it's going to be a big problem. And then, on the military side—you could maybe tell our viewers a bit more—it's not as rosy as it's being portrayed in the mainstream media. They're spending billions of dollars to intercept very cheap Shahed drones and others. So, if you could, tell us a little about the military side as this war goes on.

#Lawrence

Let me start, if you've got the time. I'll try to keep it short.

#Mudiar

Yes, of course.

#Lawrence

With a bigger picture, let me come down to that. There's a case I could make—and I think it's a very powerful one—for what we're doing in the Levant in general, but specifically now with Iran, being related to our deep, profound fear of what's happening in the very categories you just discussed, but driven by China. As I've said many times before, this inexorable movement of power, in all its elements, from the West to the East has gotten to us. And our approach to it is not to accommodate it—which should be our approach—and work with it, still remaining a pure power, if you will. Our approach is to stop it. We see, at least in the present tense, the Southern Belt and Road Initiative, which runs prominently through Iran, as the place to start. And that's why we're doing this.

It has nothing to do with Bibi. It has nothing to do with Russia, even. It's ancillary—ancillary Russia. But the big bear in the tent is China, and that's what we're trying to stop in its tracks. We picked this area to do it. We failed, so to speak, in Central Europe with Ukraine, which was part of that philosophy too, or part of that strategy, if you will. We failed majorly there. All we've got now is a stymied situation—a situation that Russia, now a co-partner with China, is probably going to exploit to our demise rather than to our credit. So we had a failure there, to a certain extent. We'll come back to that. But—I mean, not me, but we, the United States, the empire—we'll come back to Europe because we have to. But right now, we're focused on the Southern Belt and Road Initiative and China, the power behind it.

#Mudiar

Also, failure in the tariff and technology war.

#Lawrence

Yes. And if you make this argument, and you understand what Xi Jinping has just done by declaring that he's now going to establish—he has the number one systems in economics, technology, and the military—he's now going to reach out and create the number one, the only big global financial system in the world based on the renminbi. He said that. He said he's going to do that. That's a signal we cannot ignore, and the current government probably understands it, at least viscerally—and Scott Besson understands it. So that's a component of it too. We're trying to put some sort of brake on that, but what we've actually done, I think, is add an accelerant to it, a catalyst to it, because—and now I'm getting to the essence of your question about the military—we don't have the military instrument to do it.

We're trying to do it with the military, and we can't. We have nothing like the military we had in the first Iraq War. That's the first point I'd make—nothing like that military. The only thing this military today has that that one didn't is a boatload of precision-guided munitions and associated technology—things like THAAD and Patriot 1 and Patriot 2. But Iran is rapidly proving those aren't so good after all. In fact, the damage they've done to our sophisticated systems—even to me, and I already knew they weren't as advanced as we claimed—is forcing me to revisit the entire process of evaluating our military capability. It's nothing like what we had before.

And I think they're operating—both the military and the Secretary of War, and the complex around them, including RTX, Lockheed, Grumman, Boeing, and all the rest of the war merchants—on the idea that they do. But they don't. And that's extremely dangerous, to have both your defense industrial base and your leadership think they are five, six—I don't know what number to put on it—times more powerful than they are. And Iran is going to prove that. As **Haaretz** had in a sub-headline—the only newspaper in Israel that I read anymore, because it's the only one not wholly owned by Bibi Netanyahu or his buddies—the headline read: "To win, all Iran needs to do is not lose. To win, the United States and Israel need a spectacular victory." Well, that's exactly right.

They're not going to get that spectacular victory. And one of the reasons they're not is what you were asking about—because our military is not capable of producing that kind of victory. I'm not sure any military would be, really. Not if the Iranians remain resolute and stick to their guns, as it were. You'd probably need two and a half, maybe three million men and women. You'd need a decade just to put those men and women to work inside Iran—in every corner of Iran, in every cavern, in every mountain, in the Dasht-e Kavir, for example—to the places Alexander the Great went and almost died. The closest he ever came to death, other than his actual death, was along the Persian Gulf, when Parmenion couldn't get supplies to him and he was in a mess. He almost died.

So you're looking at a potentially profound defeat. Even if you could marshal that many men and women, put them in Iran, and sustain them there for, say, a decade—and you could thoroughly defeat the country the way, for example, twelve million men and women, or a good portion of them, along with the Soviets, who took twenty million casualties, defeated Nazi Germany—or the way we

and the British defeated Imperial Japan—that's the only way you're going to defeat Iran in a way that would give you the kind of spectacular victory *Haaretz* said you'd need. And would it really be so spectacular, with all the casualties that would come with it, the money being spent? No, it wouldn't. So I'm actually contradicting myself—you couldn't even do it with that many. Let me tell you why we can't do that.

We can't even run a draft right now. We cannot run a conscription process right now. Our Selective Service System is broken. A hundred million dollars, maybe, to fix it. That's chump change to Trump—he could take that out of his own bank account. But it's money that has to be spent, and a process that has to be gone through, to get it revived. Then you've got another six months to implement conscription. And while you're doing all of this—during the year you're doing all of this—the war is ongoing, and you still don't have the people you need for it. And the 18- to 24-year-olds have all been alerted to the fact that you're going to draft them. I suspect a third or more of them will leave—go somewhere else, Mexico, Canada, whatever—much the way about 30 percent, I'm told, of the call-up from Israel's reserves for this war on Lebanon didn't show up.

They're absent without leave. They left. They're hiding either within Israel or they've left Israel. So you've got an impossible task trying to wage this war against Iran, even if your strategic purpose is a valid one. You're interested in China, not Iran—and secondarily, Russia, not Iran. Iran is just the instrument you're having to take on in order to bruise China so badly in that southern Belt and Road initiative that they withdraw. And Russia itself fails to be a power that comes down from the Caucasus and adds to that weight. You've stopped that route, which was going to go up the Persian Gulf and into Russia and be the complement of the other three that are north—central north, the Trans-Siberian Railway—and then this one.

This is all to say that the power shift taking place is inexorable. History's weight is upon it, China's weight is upon it, and I'm sorry—its weight is greater than ours now in all the central elements of power except finance, and it's about to reach that point. And so you're going to fail. You're going to fail, but I understand why—the great game being afoot again, we're doing this sort of thing. And not for a moment do I think Donald Trump understands this, but there are people behind him—financiers of war, I call them—the Rothschilds of the present age, the Medicis of the present age. They're there, they see what's happening, and they want this to be their response.

They'll all jump ship, of course, when it becomes obvious that China is going to win this—China and Russia together, and perhaps India too, when Modi or whoever replaces him wakes up and understands which side the bread is buttered on, because it's definitely not buttered on our side. It's buttered on China's side. And however much India can't deal with China because of its own squabbles, it will fall by the wayside. I won't say they'll go away, but they'll fall by the wayside in strategic calculations once it's clear to everyone how dominant sixty percent of the world's population, even without India, is going to be in this struggle.

And with India, of course, it becomes an overwhelming majority of the world's population and puts the Western Hemisphere—without Brazil and without Canada perhaps, and maybe one or two South American countries—absolutely in the shade, as it were, of power. That's where we're headed, and these people are trying to stop that. So this is a huge conflagration. It's a huge competition now turned into war in several theaters that might become a much bigger war because of the components I just discussed, and the realization by Beijing, ultimately, that this is a war that might be for life or death if the empire decides to use its nuclear arsenal—which, as you're probably aware from previous interviews, I am absolutely convinced we will. Will we start this war in Southwest Asia? We might.

Will Bibi be the lead? He might. And forget a single nuclear weapon—a single nuclear weapon out of Israel on Iran is not going to do anything but make them even angrier. That's not a powerful way to influence this war. A powerful way to influence it would be to use fifteen or sixteen or more. And I'm sure Netanyahu is smart enough to understand that. Were I Iran, I probably would have already gone after Dimona. I don't know that it would do any good now, because I'd guess Israel has dispersed its nuclear weapons in a significant way, particularly to its submarines, which have the capability of firing those weapons. I think they have to surface; I don't think it's a subterranean or subsea launch like our Trident or the Soviets' complementary missile.

I think it has to be fired from a surface submarine. I don't know that, but I think so. That means they're very accurate, I'm told. They're probably the equivalent of our Tomahawk with a nuclear warhead on it, or more. So that's probably what they would use. And I don't think they'll fire just one—I think they'll fire quite a few. They'll aim at very strategic targets, looking at the damage they do and the radioactivity they produce, not just at the target itself but at the people around it, and generally at the image that presents of Iran's desperate straits. That's what Israel will do, and that's what really concerns me. I mean, no military person would shoot a single weapon.

Now, Bibi is as much in the fatigues of his military as any of the actual professionals. So I think he understands that. And you're going to merge the military leadership and the civilian leadership—you already have them merged in Israel anyway. That's the way they operate. They don't operate like we do. There isn't a civilian in charge and the military down here; in Israel, it's merged. He really does become the prince, as Clausewitz said. He really does become Napoleon. And this has been true for Israel ever since 1948. So he's merged with those military people in terms of mindset. I'm really worried about this. People think maybe I'm crazy, but I'm really worried about it. It won't be a single nuclear weapon—it'll be multiple nuclear weapons. And we'll be off to the races.

#Mudiar

Yeah, and I think it's not something unimaginable, given the analysis you've been making and we've been doing. The U.S. and Israel want a quick victory because they know they can't sustain it for very long. They just can't. There would be a huge incentive, and given all these liabilities on the U.S.

side—domestic, political, economic, military—Israel knows that at some point these pressures would be enough for even Donald Trump and the Trump administration to look for an off-ramp. I mean, whether Iran would give them that opportunity is another question.

But if the situation turns around within the U.S. very rapidly, then Netanyahu would have every incentive to go nuclear. I think my final question is whether the U.S. has enough leverage over Israel to stop this. After all, I'm assuming that the domestic legitimacy in the U.S. to use nuclear weapons must be very low at this moment, because if I compare it to the Second World War—at least the Second World War was, on the whole, a just war, or at least presented as a just war. I'm not talking about the war crimes committed within that, I'm not talking about the bombing of Tokyo or the bombing of Dresden, but on the larger scale.

It was fighting the fascists and the Nazis, and even if there was a lot of propaganda about dropping the nuclear weapons—because, after all, that was done not to stop the war, since we now know the Japanese armies were already preparing to surrender—it was really the Red Army that was marching. This was a message to stop the Red Army from entering Manchuria and taking a larger space in East Asia. But my question to you is this: if we assume the Trump administration would not allow Netanyahu and his people to go nuclear—just assuming, I'm not sure that's a correct assumption—but assuming that, would they actually be able to control Israel?

#Lawrence

I don't think so. And Trump's cavalier remarks about Israel—the prospect of Bibi using nuclear weapons—I've only seen one set of remarks, but that was cavalier enough to make me think he has no comprehension of what we just talked about, no comprehension whatsoever. His remarks were basically, "We're going to do it. We're going to do the war. We're going to beat them so badly there's no chance he'll use a nuclear weapon," which just shows how little thought he's given to it. And, you know, when you were talking about Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the end of World War II, I'd almost tell you that if I walked outside right now among the cognoscenti in my town—which is the most educated little city in America, more PhDs, more master's degrees, more baccalaureates, more lawyers, more defense contractors, more money than any other similar city in America—

I'll bet you I couldn't find two people who know that Curtis LeMay's firebombing of Tokyo and other cities killed more people than both nuclear weapons put together—and that that was two weeks of nothing but war crimes. Burned them to death, burned whole cities, villages, towns. So if you want some war crimes from World War II, there's one that even exceeds the two nuclear weapons, in my view. And that we would do something like that again—I don't have to ponder it at all. Of course we would. We are the only ones who have used nuclear weapons to kill humans in mass numbers. We will be the next ones to do it, in my estimation. I don't think—I don't feel that way about China. I don't feel that way about Russia.

I think Russia, in fact, has shown enormous restraint in this Ukraine business. Maybe on one or two occasions they had adequate provocation to at least demonstrate a nuclear weapon or something like that. For example, when Ukraine actually attacked Russia—attacked their strategic warning capability. I mean, what an insane thing to do. And yet they did it, and I'll guarantee you we provided them intelligence in order to do it. So I have no compunction whatsoever about saying that we will be the next to use nuclear weapons, or Bibi will be the next to use nuclear weapons. That's the thing about this struggle, which I think is defined, however briefly, in the geostrategic terms I've mentioned. I have no problem imagining us using nuclear weapons, or Bibi using nuclear weapons.

Add to that the fact that I know there are people now in our labs who, in the trillion-dollar-plus—actually, I think it's more like \$2.5 trillion now—money we're going to spend to modernize, securitize, you know, all those fancy terms, our nuclear weapons stockpile. There are people in those labs who don't know the history of the Manhattan Project, who don't know the history that you and I just briefly went over, and who think that technology is the name of the game. And AI has made that just so much better to play with. And boy, they can build nuclear weapons now that'll be so good, we'll just have to use them. I know there's that mindset out there now—I've heard it expressed. And I've also heard military officers talk about things like, "We pay all this money for these weapons, but we never use them. Hmm. We probably should."

This is a very dangerous departure from everything we learned during the Cold War. But it's typical of history that one generation, two generations—whatever—live through a time like World War I or World War II, and then have a long period of relative peace after that, just little brush wars here and there. And, oh, with the modern volunteer military, no one participates in them except the poor. I mean, really, that's who participates in them—mercenaries. I'm not saying that in a derogatory way; I'm saying it as an expression of reality. That's really what we have now. Less than 1%, I think it is—less than 1% of America has served. So what does the other 99% care about? We're in a time now where we're re-entering that world, that Hobbesian world of massive disorder, and we are actually leading the creation of that disorder. These are perilous times.

#Mudiar

We'll leave it there. Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, thank you so much for your time. It was a wonderful conversation.

#Lawrence

Thank you for having me. I really appreciate it.

#Ayushman

Hi, my name is Ayushman. I, along with Mudiar Jyotishman, have started this platform. Over the last two years, we've tried to build content for the left and progressive forces. We've interviewed economists, historians, political commentators, and activists so far. If you've liked our content and want us to build an archive for the left, I have two requests for you. Please consider donating to the cause—the link is in the description below. And if you're not able to do that, don't feel bad; you can always like our videos and share them with your comrades. Finally, don't forget to hit the subscribe button.