

Israeli F-16 Downed by Iran, The Middle East Will Never Be the Same

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Saturday, March 21st, 2026, and I'm here to talk with you about the conflict and the war in Iran, in the Middle East and West Asia. I think there are a lot of things happening right now on the battlefield, especially with the new, you know, sort of information we've learned. Last night we learned that an Israeli F-16 was hit by an Iranian air defense system, and the night before, an F-35 was hit. But before getting to what's going on right now on the battlefield, I want to talk about how we got here and what has happened so far. I think if you want to understand the conflict, the war in the Middle East, you have to look at what is happening and how it's destroying so many places.

You look at today, how they're bombing each other and destroying everything. It's just unbelievable. But before getting to this point, let's remember what happened during Donald Trump's first term in office, his first presidency. One of the main goals of the Trump administration in those days, from 2017 to 2021, was to put tremendous sanctions on the Iranian economy, and he did everything—he even went far beyond that. He assassinated the Iranian commander, General Soleimani, if you remember. He wasn't just a simple commander; he was a very respected commander in the Middle East, and a diplomat, I would say.

And he was a very successful diplomat, talking with politicians both in the Middle East and outside of it. He was well respected in China and in Russia. The assassination was meant to break Iranian power in the Middle East because they thought that everything Iran had—this sort of hegemony, as they call it, the so-called hegemony that Iran has in the region—was based on one person, General Soleimani. You had to kill him in order to break the backbone of the resistance. That was the main agenda for Donald Trump, together with the sanctions on Iran. Then what happened was, he couldn't manage to negotiate with the Iranians.

In those days, the Supreme Leader of Iran said, after the assassination of General Soleimani, that there was no way they could talk or negotiate with Donald Trump—no way to go in that direction. So he tried so hard; he did everything. Before leaving office in 2021, he said, "I brought the Iranians to their knees. I just needed a little more time to convince them, to force them into negotiations." But it didn't happen, by the way. Then we had the new administration, Joe Biden. But the main agenda was still to destroy the Iranian economy and the Iranian resistance—the acts of resistance in West Asia. When he came to power, the situation was totally different. You remember there was the assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

You know, many people were arguing in the mainstream media that the axis of resistance was being destroyed by the Israelis. It was a huge impact, a big problem for Hezbollah. For many years, he was the head of Hezbollah—so powerful, respected in Lebanon and outside of Lebanon, within the axis of resistance. His loss was a huge blow, really crucial for the whole axis of resistance. Then they said Hezbollah was weakened. We had the fall of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. And with that fall—well, basically, Bashar al-Assad had decided not to fight. He told the Iranians and the Russians he didn't want to fight. And it didn't happen suddenly.

It started, you know, long before—over a span of about two years ago. It happened gradually, reducing the presence of Iranians and Russians in Syria and somehow getting closer to the Arab states in the Persian Gulf, hoping that could bring some sort of improvement to the Syrian economy and make life better for Syrians. But that didn't happen. And finally, we saw the fall of Bashar al-Assad, and HTS and a faction of ISIS coming to power without fighting. You have to remember, there was no fight between the Syrian army and these HTS fighters who came from Idlib, supported by Turkey and the United States, both.

And Israel did everything to support them as well. Later on, they had their differences. But after all, putting aside the situation in Syria, you have to understand what happened in Lebanon, then in Syria. Donald Trump came to power and said, "So what's the problem right now? How can we go after the axis of resistance? Syria is destroyed. Lebanon—Hezbollah—is not powerful enough anymore. Let's go after the Yemenis, the Houthis, and Sarawak in Yemen." Then you saw Pete Hegseth coming out, saying, "We're going to go after the Houthis. It's going to be different. We're going to force them into submission and war." They started the fight in March 2025. They started this fight and went after the Yemenis.

After two months—so in May—they decided that the Houthis had suddenly capitulated and said, "We're not going to continue this fight," because they couldn't achieve anything. What was happening in those days in Yemen? They were bombing every place they could because they didn't have much intelligence coming out of the country. You might remember Donald Trump posting about one of the religious gatherings in Yemen—he targeted that gathering and said, "These are terrorists; they were preparing to attack us, and that's why we destroyed them." But that wasn't the case at all. The Yemenis were facing huge difficulties then, especially in the Red Sea. You might recall that one or two of those fighter jets were actually damaged by the Yemenis.

They managed to shoot down the American drones. We can say at least one of these drones was destroyed each week, and in some weeks it was two or three. Then the United States—Donald Trump—somehow realized this was a trap. He couldn't sustain it. It was going to be a quagmire for the United States in Yemen because they didn't have the intelligence to go after the key commanders or the key sites of the Houthis. They saw a lot but couldn't hit them. Most of the weapons and missiles were underground, so they couldn't destroy them and couldn't defeat the Houthis. Then Donald Trump came out and said, "They capitulated. We're out. We're not going to be there."

And just to remember, during the war—or before it happened in the Red Sea—the Vice President of the United States, J.D. Vance, came out and said, “We are not dependent on Bab el-Mandeb or the Red Sea; the Europeans need that.” That kind of statement helped fuel this capitulation rhetoric from Donald Trump. So Yemen couldn’t be defeated. In the mind of the Trump administration, Syria was defeated, Syria was removed, and Donald Trump, as he still argues today, says that if Syria is in our hands, we can manage it, we can do whatever we want in Syria. And Hezbollah in Lebanon, he says, was defeated as well. So what was the main goal? The war—the capitulation—was announced in May 2025. Then in June, we had a new war: Israel attacking Iran.

On June 13, you remember that while Donald Trump was negotiating with the Iranians, he was trying to convince them that the U.S. was serious about these talks. I talked with Iran—when I was there, I spoke with officials. One of the deputy foreign ministers told me that the night before the attack, they were in Geneva talking with Steve Witkoff. They thought something was going to happen, but in the end, nothing happened diplomatically. And then we saw how Israel attacked Iran.

So when it comes to the Israeli attack on Iran, you have to understand why Donald Trump decided to let Israel strike while he was negotiating—while he was deceiving the Iranians. Netanyahu had provided Trump with what he claimed was solid information: that he had built a strong network of spies inside Iran, that he could move freely, do whatever he wanted, bomb Iran, neutralize the air defense system, even carry out a decapitation—an assassination of the Iranian leader along with his commander. That, he said, would bring a huge change, maybe even a regime change—the best outcome for the United States and Israel together. So Donald Trump said, “Go and do it. We’re prepared. We’re deceiving the Iranians. You can attack.” And then the attack happened.

The 12-day war has shown the United States and Israel that it doesn’t matter who the commanders are. You kill the commanders, you assassinate them, you attack Iran. It was a surprise attack, by the way. In the initial hours, you remember, everybody was asking what was happening in Iran—why they weren’t responding to these attacks by the Israelis. And it wasn’t just Israel. Believe me, it was Israel together with the United States and all the NATO countries—Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand—all together. All the intelligence work, you know, they were trying to do everything, provide everything to Netanyahu and his regime in Israel to make this operation as successful as possible.

Then, as time went by—on the second or third day, about 12 hours after the initial attacks on the Iranians—you started to see everything coming out, and the Iranians regrouping and striking back at Israel. The attacks were so strong that Israel finally decided—because, remember, about 25% of the THAAD system interceptors were depleted during those 12 days of war—that it had to ask for a ceasefire. Israel was being hit by Iranian missiles from all directions. So, by the end of the 12-day war, Israel was begging for a ceasefire. Donald Trump, as an outsider—and he’s trying to play the same game in Ukraine, by the way—said, “We are not part of the war right now.”

He asked the Iranians to let the United States end the conflict by hitting both sides—the nuclear facilities in Iran. Then Iran attacked. These were more like symbolic attacks between the United States and Iran on Qatar—two attacks, and supposedly the end of the war. But it wasn't really the end; it was more of a truce, a ceasefire taking shape. Then, the other thing that had been happening since Donald Trump took power was the same kind of policy aimed at attacking the Iranian economy. They did everything—they started with China, with Russia. Since the war in Ukraine wasn't going the way the United States and the West wanted, their leverage over Russia wasn't as strong as it had been during the first administration. So Russia and China are not in the same position now.

They're not supported in the United States in their agenda against Iran, because the whole system has changed since the war in Ukraine started. The war in Ukraine was a watershed moment, in my opinion—it changed everything, every calculation. So, coming to the conflict, to the war in Iran, you see Donald Trump—well, we had the U.S. Treasury Secretary talking about how they were successfully putting pressure on the Iranian economy. Then that pressure hit the Iranian people, the Iranian society. Then they came to the streets. It wasn't just people coming to the streets; the remnants of those Mossad agents in Iran were still there after the 12-day war.

Iran was trying to capture them, you know—to hit them, find them, destroy them. But it wasn't that simple; it was a huge network of spies in Iran, people cooperating with the Israelis, Mossad, and the CIA. So Donald Trump was trying to understand the situation in Iran by imposing more sanctions and bringing more pain to the Iranian economy. Then, suddenly, we see people coming out into the streets. I was in Iran when this started. The day I got there—I remember it was Thursday. On Friday, I had a talk with Colin Wilkerson and Larry Johnson, our friends from this podcast. There were no protests outside yet, but in the West, they were already talking about how protests were coming. Then we saw the protests actually start in the streets.

For two days, the government in Iran tried to talk with the protesters and with economists about how to reduce the pressure on the Iranian people—how to manage the market and provide some kind of subsidies. But while they were doing this, the agenda was something else. They were preparing on the streets, as Mike Pompeo pointed out. They were working with Mossad agents among the protesters to set up the whole case, because they wanted riots. They didn't want protests. Protests can be negotiated, can be discussed with the government, can be slowed down and eventually fade away. But riots are different, because you have to create riots to kill people.

Without riots, it wouldn't make sense to kill people. Then the riots started, and you could see people getting killed. The problem for the Iranian security forces was that they didn't know who these people were among the civilians. After everything that happened during those days—it started one week earlier and turned into riots after about two days—you saw people dying. The protests ended up turning into riots and completely changing the dynamic of what was happening in Iran. So it's

happening: riots are coming, people are being killed—civilians, mostly—and this creates the kind of situation where more than 30,000 people, some of them, you know, are positions paid by Mossad and NGOs.

They said 80,000. And what Iran did during those days—Iran realized that the commanders running the show, these protests, weren't inside Iran. Their network was inside Iran, but the masters were outside. The connection between the masters and the people on the ground—the Mossad agents—was the internet. So they shut down the internet in Iran. But it wasn't just the regular Iranian internet; it was Starlink. Many Starlink units, you know, this equipment, were in Iran. They tried to find them, but it was a time-consuming mission. It wasn't something you could do right away, because it was a very difficult task for the Iranian security forces. So they decided to shut down Starlink. The first time shutting down Starlink was something big.

After that, you see everything coming down, because those people who were receiving orders from outside weren't getting them anymore. And you see a lot of people killed on the streets during these riots. Then, just imagine what was happening with the economy—then the riots, the killings, the rhetoric about 30,000 people killed by the Iranian government, or 80,000. In those days, when there was no internet in Iran, I remember I was there, and people outside couldn't reach us. Somehow, I got access to the internet because I went to Press TV to see if they had a connection to do some podcasts. And I saw that they were talking about the Iranian government using chemical weapons against the Iranian people—that's why, they said, the internet was shut down.

So it was all propaganda. They were preparing everything to influence the Iranian people psychologically, both inside and outside the country. The people inside, as time went by, were starting to see what was really happening. But most of those living outside didn't have any connection with people inside Iran, so they started believing the rhetoric in the mainstream media, or even in some alternative media. Another problem I noticed, along with the economic pressure on Iran, was the way many so-called Iranian experts outside the country—mostly in the United States—were talking. They kept saying that Iran is weaker now than it was twenty years ago.

You know, these so-called experts keep arguing that Iran is weaker, while at the same time creating all these economic difficulties and saying the Iranian government is killing its own people. It was all just to prepare everything for Donald Trump psychologically—to say, "Look what Iran is doing. We're going to be there, we're going to help you, we're going to save you." And he bought into those lies, thinking he was going to save the Iranian people. That was the rhetoric. It wasn't that Donald Trump didn't know what was going on—his agenda was war from day one. That's why he started the war against the Houthis. It wasn't just Netanyahu convincing him after the election; they had been preparing Donald Trump even before he was elected in the United States.

That's why Donald Trump decided to go after the Houthis. It was part of the plan: go and weaken the axis of resistance when the axis of resistance isn't capable of firing back. Go after what Netanyahu calls the "head of the snake." They were all preparing this kind of agenda—to go after

Iran and to somehow convince the Iranian people that their government doesn't work for them. You remember yesterday, Pete Hegseth said the Iranian government is just building missiles and weapons, not improving the lives of the Iranian people, while he was asking for \$20 billion more for his war against Iran, as is happening right now. So it wasn't something that suddenly came into Donald Trump's mind—"let's go and fight Iran." He knew he was going to fight the Iranians.

He was going to go to war with the Iranians. So he was preparing everything—considering the axis of resistance, the Iranian economy, and public opinion inside and outside Iran—to go after the Iranian government. You remember he said, "I told the Israelis during the 12-day war, when that war happened, I told Benjamin Netanyahu, or the Israelis, not to assassinate the Supreme Leader of Iran." That was a total lie. He was just making things up because they wanted to assassinate the Supreme Leader, but they couldn't do it with that surprise attack. That was the problem. So with the whole scene being prepared for Donald Trump to step in, he was ready for this attack. But to start a war against Iran, the United States would have to mobilize a lot of equipment.

So it took time to get there—to bring aircraft carriers and all these weapons to the region, preparing for that. You know, somehow believing that an attack on Iran would bring down the Iranian government and lead to regime change. I think when it comes to the Middle East, many in our audience who aren't from the region, who don't understand the reality of the Middle East, may wonder: what is the agenda? What is the agenda of the United States and Israel in the Middle East? I think that was said by Tom Barrack, Trump's envoy to Turkey. The final goal, the main objective, is submission. They have to learn how to submit. That's why their best friends in the Middle East are those who submitted long, long, long before—all these Arab states.

Who has to submit right now? The Axis of Resistance and Iran. Are they prepared to submit? He's negotiating—trying to convince them, to force them into capitulation—but that's not going to happen. Because even if he wanted to, you remember Marco Rubio said Donald Trump was willing to talk with the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei. He was prepared, but there was no willingness on the part of the Iranians to go in that direction, because the Supreme Leader didn't recognize Donald Trump as a viable negotiator or someone who could bring any real change to what's going on between the United States and Iran. So he refused; he didn't want to negotiate with Donald Trump. And Trump said, "Let's go with the plan."

"Let's attack." And the Israelis said—remember, Israel told the United States, and it was all over the mainstream media—that they had destroyed the Iranian air defense system. "They're mostly destroyed." Look at the videos on Fox News, CNN, ABC, MSNBC—all of them. The main rhetoric was that the entire Iranian air defense system had been destroyed, that Iran had nothing left to defend itself. The Iranian society was supposedly in turmoil, ready for an attack, ready to overthrow the government in Iran. So Donald Trump told some of these Arab states in the Persian Gulf, "I'm going to get in. It's not going to take too much time—it's going to be four days of regime change in Iran."

And I'm going to overthrow the government. I'm going to do the same. What was happening—one of the miscalculations, or one of the false assumptions by Donald Trump himself, in my opinion—was based on what happened in Venezuela. Because we have to consider what happened there. The Maduro government—there was a regime change in Venezuela. They replaced Maduro with his vice president, Delcy Rodríguez. And then they had total control over Venezuelan oil, Venezuelan minerals, everything. They could do whatever they wanted. Donald Trump could order this or that, fire someone, appoint someone else. That gave him a false understanding about Iran, because he thought he was going to achieve something similar.

It's going to be difficult, but not that difficult, because of the economy and the situation with the Iranian military—they were destroyed. Everything: the air defense system, the economy, all destroyed. People are angry with the Iranian government. So, let's get in. Let's attack Iran. We were talking about the attacks happening at 12:30 a.m. or 4 a.m. local time, but the attack actually happened at 10 a.m. local time. They thought they had assassinated the Supreme Leader of Iran along with many of the commanders. But Iran was prepared. You remember how long it took the United States to bring all those weapons and aircraft carriers to the region and get ready.

What was crucial in the whole calculation was the reaction of the Arab states. They told us they weren't going to be part of the conflict. They knew the war was going to happen, but they were hoping that if something did happen, it would be short. Donald Trump told them, remember, "four days of war and everything will be over." They thought that in such a short period, Iran wouldn't attack them because they said they weren't part of the attack. They also said they wouldn't let the United States use the air bases in their countries. So, as soon as the attack happened, Iran started hitting back. Trump said he was surprised by Iran's response toward those Arab states—but he really wasn't.

He's lying because he wants everyone to believe he didn't know Iran would hit those Arab states. He convinced these people—these naive, in my opinion, Arab leaders—that everything would be over in a short period of time, so they wouldn't be too affected by the war against Iran. So the war breaks out: the United States attacks, and Iran responds. And all these air bases—today, when you look at them—I remember, about twenty years ago, the IRGC was arguing with the Iranian government, with the politicians, with those who were negotiating the JCPOA with the Americans. They said, "Why aren't we using the Strait of Hormuz to put pressure on the United States, on these Arab states—basically on the United States—because the main goal of putting pressure on the Arab states is to ultimately reach Washington?"

They had been arguing about this for such a long time, but the diplomats—the foreign minister of Iran—didn't agree with them. They said, "No, we're going to negotiate during the JCPOA." I'm talking about those days. Now the war is bringing something new into the equation. Iran is responding. Nobody can deny that the United States, together with Israel, is using its air force to destroy targets—mostly from outside Iranian airspace. They're attacking mostly from a distance. You'

d think they would have a lot of intelligence about targets inside Iran, but so far, from what I've seen, there's no sign of Mossad agents or intelligence coming out of Iran, because the targets are so stupid—so dumb.

They're hitting civilians—hospitals, schools, highways, you know, squares. These are not important. Police officers—these are not important targets when you want to fight. Look at what Russia is doing in Ukraine: they're fighting a war, they're not destroying Ukraine. But the mission of the United States and Israel is to destroy Iran, while they're talking to some of the Iranian diaspora and somehow forcing them into this delusion that, you know, "We're going to go there, we're going to change the government, we're going to do the so-called regime change in Iran, and everything's going to be good—you're going to see a prosperous Iran."

This is a false narrative on the part of Donald Trump and his administration, together with the Israelis. Donald Trump wants something like Venezuela in Iraq. What does that mean? It means submission. What Israel wants in Iran is to make Iran as weak as possible. What does that mean? It means destroying and breaking down Iran into provinces, so they can be, you know, some parts of Iran that could be like Bahrain or Qatar—diminished militarily, economically. Then, if Israel somehow decides to attack them, they're not capable of responding. That's the problem. This is Iran. But the miscalculation on the part of the Israelis, together with the United States, is that they think Iran doesn't matter.

You want to call them mullahs, you want to call them religious leaders, as though they don't have any understanding—politically or militarily. But the reality in Iran today is that they've built a robust system inside the country, both militarily and politically, that cannot be destroyed. This is the heritage of Iranian culture, of the Iranian people. It's the heritage of the Iranian Shia concept. People should understand that Iran is a Shia Muslim country—it's based on resistance, not on killing civilians. They're not going to kill civilians.

They're not going to go after civilians. If they attack some regions—the attacks that are happening in places like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, or Qatar—it's because the United States has moved much of its equipment and personnel from those bases to other, sometimes populated, areas. And you remember that the attack on Kharg Island came from the UAE—two populated locations in the UAE were used to attack Kharg Island. They're trying to do everything to make the case for the Iranian army to hit civilians in Arab states, but that's not going to work. That's a failed agenda.

It doesn't matter how hard Israel and the United States are trying to stage false flag operations in Azerbaijan or Turkey. Yesterday, the Supreme Leader of Iran—the new Supreme Leader—said the attacks on Turkey and Azerbaijan were not Iranian attacks, and nobody from the Axis of Resistance carried them out. That means these attacks were basically part of an Israeli operation, because Israel wants to create the idea that Iran is the enemy of the Arabs, the Arabs are the enemy, and

the United States is the enemy of everyone. This is the Israeli agenda. After all, you remember Donald Trump, in his kind of weak rhetoric, said, "We're going to capture Gaza." Netanyahu was shocked when he said that.

So do you think Netanyahu would let Donald Trump, you know, for the sake of Greater Israel? In the idea of Greater Israel, I'd say the United States really has nothing to do with that agenda the Israelis have in mind. But what's happening right now on the battlefield, in this war, is that Israel is using the United States as a proxy. They're doing that because the United States has a president who's willing to go along with it, who doesn't have any kind of agenda for a new election in the U.S. So this is his final gamble. How come Joe Biden can overthrow Bashar al-Assad, but Donald Trump can't do it to Iran? Donald Trump is trying to do everything to make that happen. He did everything.

And he's being defeated—defeated strategically, militarily, and politically. Looking at what's happening right now, all these American bases in the Middle East were destroyed. Physically, the radars were destroyed. The most important thing in these bases was the radars, and all of them were destroyed. The CIA offices were destroyed too. So what else can the United States bring to the table? I'd say this kind of rhetoric right now—they're just talking about attacking Khark Island, capturing Khark Island, trying to gain some leverage over the Strait of Hormuz, and "opening up" the Strait of Hormuz. It's all false. It's all delusional.

Nobody would believe what Donald Trump is talking about. But I'm not going to say he wouldn't do it. Before leaving Iran, many people—my friends, close friends—were asking me, "Do you think Donald Trump would attack Iran?" I said, no, he's not stupid. But he's proven that he can be that way. So I can't rule out the option of attacking Khark Island. That could happen, or maybe some other places in the Persian Gulf, along the coast of Iran, near the Strait of Hormuz. They could go there. But Iran is very complicated terrain. The terrain is different.

You know, when you go from the sea to the land, you see a lot of things happening. It's not just about the coast or the length of the coast. You see the Zagros Mountains and all these difficulties they're going to face. And Iran is going to—if they put these Marines on Khark Island, they're going to be slaughtered. I'd be so disappointed if they did that. That's not good for what's going on. Killing more people isn't going to make you win, Donald Trump. And you have to understand, this is not a winnable war. I can't see any sort of fracture in the Iranian system today, in the Iranian political system.

They're more unified. As time goes by, and the United States keeps destroying more civilian infrastructure in Iran, they attack—like yesterday, for example, they attacked the South Pars LNG plant, the oil and gas facilities. Iran didn't attack those facilities. You remember, Iranians were attacked. They even hit the desalination plant in Iran, and Iran didn't respond the same way. Iran was keeping its eye on strategic targets, because Iran's strategic target is not civilians. It doesn't matter if it's in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, or even in Israel—Iran is not going to kill civilians. Iran is attacking strategic targets in Israel.

That's not going to change. Iran didn't use chemical weapons during eight years of war with the Iraqis, with Saddam Hussein, who was using chemical weapons. To this day, we have many people who were injured by chemical weapons and are dying because of that problem. Iran is not going to go there. But when it comes to the oil facilities, Iran is going to go as far as they want. They can destroy everything in the region. They can bring the whole global economy to its knees. Donald Trump is not prepared for that. I think the United States is not prepared for that. That's why Donald Trump is somehow begging the Europeans to do something for him.

Because he feels that if he can bring a lot of political power to the region, that would influence things—that would break the backbone of the Iranian resistance to what's going on. That's not going to happen. Iran is fighting for its survival. Iran has been under tremendous sanctions for 46 years. You go to Iran today, you can't find another country that's been sanctioned for 46 years. It shows how intelligent and how powerful the system in Iran is. It's not like Cuba or Venezuela, which were sanctioned by the United States for such a long time. They're not even comparable. I would say they're more comparable to, for example, here where I live in Brazil.

They're comparable to Brazil. You go to Iran, you find that the cities—even, you know, go to Tehran—I would argue it's better than São Paulo in many aspects. But putting that aside, I'm just mentioning this because you have to understand that under tremendous sanctions, the Iranian resistance has learned how to fight back, how to manage, how to deal with those pressures. So, what's happening right now? I think, finally, the outcome—Donald Trump, you know, yesterday Pete Hegseth was saying that they're winning, that everything is happening in their favor.

The air defense system—again, as Israel destroyed about 70 or 80 percent of it back in June 2020—by 2025 they're still destroying air defense systems and launchers in Iran. They're saying, "We destroyed everything, we have air supremacy." But then you see, for example, breaking news just before this slide: we learned that an Israeli F-16 was downed by the Iranian air defense system last night, and the night before it was an F-35. So what's the outcome today? Iranian missiles are still raining down, the Iranian nuclear program is still operating. They tried today to attack one of the nuclear facilities in Isfahan, but they couldn't achieve anything because those facilities were buried under a tremendous amount of soil. Iran was prepared for that.

And you see, the Iranian government is still in place. The system is back, even after the assassination of one of the most, I would say, important Iranian officials—someone who could have helped the West, who could have helped the negotiations. But the United States doesn't want to negotiate. Israel doesn't want to negotiate. And since Israel doesn't want to negotiate, the United States falls into the same sort of agenda. Because when it comes to the Middle East, the United States is not a sovereign state; they don't have their own policies. Their policies are shaped by Israel and the Israeli agenda. So, the Strait of Hormuz is mostly controlled by the Iranian army, as we

discussed. It's turning into a toll booth, and they can charge these tankers two million dollars for each one passing through the Strait of Hormuz. Today, they talked with the Japanese foreign minister.

You know, there was a call between the Iranian foreign minister and the Japanese foreign minister—they talked to each other. Iran said, "We can facilitate the Japanese tankers to use the Strait of Hormuz." So the problem, the Iranian war, is not with Japan, not with South Korea. The problem is the Israeli agenda and the slave of that agenda, which, unfortunately, I have to say, is the United States' foreign policy. And the U.S. Air Force and Navy are trying their best to hit what they can find—but they can't locate the most strategic sites in Iran. That's why they're hitting civilians. The U.S. air bases are literally being obliterated in the Arab states.

They still have some sort of connection in Iran. And in Turkey—Turkey is the most crucial one, in my opinion, that they're using. That's why they tried to do a false flag in Turkey, saying it was Iranian, that it was Iranians attacking them. I don't see anybody buying that kind of argument. I see a deep understanding between the government in Iran and the government in Turkey. Beyond all these problems and the rhetoric coming out, there's a deep connection between the two nations, between the two governments—they understand the reality of what's going on. That's why Erdogan came out and said what he said. We can criticize Erdogan for whatever he's doing with the case of Iran and what he was doing with the case of Gaza.

But after all, he knows he's not going to destroy his own country for the sake of a greater Israel. I think that's totally understandable on their part. And the Red Sea isn't even in the equation right now. Iran is using Hezbollah—Hezbollah is back. You have to remember, they said Hezbollah was destroyed. Hezbollah is hitting the southern part of Israel; they've never done this before this war. So they're bringing something new to the whole equation on that front. The Iraqi Hezbollah, or Hashad al-Shaabi as they call it—the Iraqi resistance—is totally in power. They're attacking American bases, and together with American embassies in Iraq, somehow we're neutered. These embassies were neutered.

Basically, I'm talking about how the embassy in Iraq was somehow neutered. And then you see the Red Sea. I think the next level of the conflict would be the Strait of Hormuz working together with the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb. But we're not there yet—we're still not there. It seems to me that the Axis of Resistance has decided there's coordination within it. They've decided they don't need the Houthis, the Yemenis, and Sarlat to join the fight. So what's happening right now in that direction is that they're preparing—they're all ready to do whatever they decide to do when the right moment comes to attack the United States. And yesterday we learned that NATO troops are leaving the region.

So NATO is withdrawing its troops from the region. Despite helping the United States in every possible way—not just the Europeans, but also Australia, Canada, and New Zealand—they're all helping the U.S. defend Israel, in terms of intelligence and defensive power, and even somewhat

offensively. The government of Stormers said yesterday that they're going to let the United States use Diego Garcia and the British bases to attack Iran. Iran is bringing something new—the new missiles that were reported by the Wall Street Journal, if I'm not mistaken. These missiles have a range of more than 3,500.

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Because they thought the range of the Iranian ballistic missiles was below that, but right now Iran is showing something new—that they can hit Diego Garcia. I think the intention wasn't actually to hit Diego Garcia, just to show the United States that they could if it came to that. They're prepared to do that as well. And the other problem right now is the oil, the Strait of Hormuz. Donald Trump is somehow begging the Europeans to help him with the Strait of Hormuz. That's not going to happen. The oil prices are going up, and Donald Trump doesn't seem to have any sort of immediate solution for what's going on. Oh, and I forgot to mention—the drones. More than 10% of the U.S. drones have been destroyed so far.

We had the THAAD air defense system—three or four of them were destroyed. That's why the United States has decided to bring this air defense system from South Korea to defend Israel. But the problem is deeper than that. The air defense system, you know, can't really defend Israel without being connected to the radars. You remember that radar—it cost more than a billion dollars—the early warning radar that was destroyed. That's causing a lot of pain for civilians in Israel, because before, the warning signal reached them in 30 or 40 minutes, even an hour. Now that's been reduced to 30 seconds, 20 seconds, maybe a minute. So that's bringing a lot of pain to society.

The other thing is, if the United States decides to finally act—because they're so desperate with the situation in the Strait of Hormuz—Donald Trump, just before coming to this live, tweeted something like a threat to the Europeans: "If you don't help me with the Strait of Hormuz, I'm going to capture Greenland." I mean, this is desperation. You have to be really desperate to go that far, to threaten Europeans who are helping you—helping you in Cyprus, helping you in Jordan, helping you defend Israel. And you say, that's not enough, you have to come here too. No, the German foreign defense minister said there's nothing we can bring to the table that would be a game changer.

But Donald Trump doesn't understand it. He says, "You have to bring whatever you have," while his aircraft carrier is a thousand kilometers away from the Iranian coast. He's afraid to go into the region, but he's asking other people to come there to defend—somehow. And he said, this is not the problem of the United States. Coming back to what J.D. Vance said before leaving the Red Sea, he said this is not going to influence our economy, because we're not that dependent on the Bab el-Mandeb in the Red Sea. It's the Europeans who are affected by the problem in the Red Sea, so they have to do something about it before capitulation is announced by Donald Trump. And right now, we're in the same sort of desperation.

I'm not saying that Donald Trump would come out and say, "I'm capitulating now." It seems to me the war is going to continue, and it's going to turn into a war of attrition. Iran is prepared for such a war—it's been preparing itself for it. But Europe is not ready for that. Europe was hit hard by what happened in Ukraine; the war in Ukraine destroyed the European economy. That's why Europe isn't really prepared to get involved again in a new conflict, a new war on behalf of the United States. I don't see the war in Ukraine as being beneficial for Europeans. That was a war prepared and designed by the United States.

And many people may want to ignore that, but that's the reality. The United States started the war in Ukraine. The United States is supporting the war in Ukraine. The United States is supplying the Ukrainian government with weapons, ammunition, and intelligence. Everything is American. There's nothing left in Europe. Everything—everything American in Europe—was sent to Ukraine to fight Russia. The same would happen in the Middle East. It's going to be a war of attrition. If Donald Trump decides to continue this war, it's going to be a war of attrition in which you're going to see a lot of the United States.

I don't know if he's smart enough to avoid getting involved on the ground, because a ground operation would be a kind of suicide for those forces the United States decides to send into Iran. This isn't good for anybody—nobody is going to benefit from this situation—and Israel is going to be the loser in the long run. Many people argue that "Greater Israel" is doing this or that, but there is no Greater Israel. The axis of resistance is gaining momentum; it's growing stronger. The United States today, as we speak, after 46 years of sanctions, is somehow unsanctioning Iranian oil.

You know, these diplomats in Iran were desperately negotiating for such a long time to achieve that. But they're achieving it now through this war that's happening. This shows how the dynamic of the war is changing, how it's taking shape. It's not going to be an easy war—it's going to be a long one. And I would say that, finally, it's going to be one of those situations where I don't know if Donald Trump is willing to go that far. It's going to turn into something like Iraq or Afghanistan. But Iran is not Iraq or Afghanistan. Iran is different. Iran is a civilization—an ancient country, an ancient culture—in which we have Christians, Muslims, Shias, Sunnis, Jews. All these people have been living together for centuries, for thousands of years. These people know how to defend themselves.

These are not the products of the British Empire. They kicked out the British Empire, and I would say they would do the same to the American Empire. That may actually help America as a country. I think if America gets out of the Middle East with these devastating policies, it's going to be beneficial in the long run for the United States. Israel is not going to be there forever. Most of the Jewish people living in Israel can live in that region without an Israeli government—without a state under the Netanyahu government. They can live; these people know how to live together. They don't need that. And I think, finally, it comes down to the solution: we have to consider that what's going on between Iran and the United States, between Iran and Israel, is the outcome of the ongoing conflict—the ongoing war, this genocide in Gaza.

They destroyed Gaza. They destroyed the West Bank. Look at Gaza today—what it was before October 7th. They couldn't defeat Hamas. They couldn't defeat Hezbollah. I think they'll have some surprises in Syria as well. It's not going to stay the way it is today. Everything is going to change. The Middle East is reshaping itself in a way it hasn't before. I see many things happening. We may learn that the United States is attacking Iran on the ground, but that doesn't change anything. Even if they put troops on the ground, that's not going to help the United States. That's not going to help the Trump administration. That's my understanding of the current situation of the war.

Thank you so much for being with us today. I hope I could, you know, help you somehow understand the Iranian mindset—what's happening in the Middle East and the acts of resistance. The acts of resistance are stronger, greater than before, and this war on Iran will make them even stronger. This is the outcome of what Donald Trump is doing. Thank you so much. It was a great pleasure. You know, this is the first time I'm talking to you this way. Usually, I do interviews and talk with our friends on this podcast. I really felt I needed to do this because many people don't know Iran, don't know the Middle East, don't know how Israel is behaving in that region, and how these Arab states are facilitating what Israel is doing. These Arab states—if they want to survive—they have to do something. They have to change.

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Drastic changes may come to the leadership in these countries. In the case of Saudi Arabia, if they're smart enough, they'll understand that Iran can provide them with security in the region—and they can provide Iran with security in the region. It's a two-way street. You know, you convince the Iranians, and you don't let American bases come in. They used your soil, your territory, to go against Iran, fighting on behalf of the Israelis—being a proxy for Israel. And you convince Iran that you're not going to have those bases back, or CIA agents. I think the case of the CIA is going to be difficult, but Iran is going to guarantee that you're not going to be hit by Iranian missiles.

You're not going to be disrupted when it comes to your oil, your gas, your exports—your survival. This is the new architecture for the region. Iran is defining it on the battlefield. It's not negotiable anymore. It's going to be decided on the battlefield, just as Russia is doing in Ukraine. I think Russia is getting to that point, and they have to decide about the future on the battlefield, not outside of it. Because these negotiations with the so-called "Soviet cop," Jared Kushner—these are not serious people, unfortunately. Thank you so much for being with me today. A great pleasure, as always.