

Col. Jacques Baud: Iran's Move: Monetizing the World's Oil Lifeline

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Monday, March 23rd, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Col. Jacques Baud, is here with us. Welcome back, Colonel.

#Jacques

Yeah, thank you very much for having me back on your show. Thank you for the invitation, and hello to everybody.

#Nima

Colonel, let's start with the situation in the Middle East—the war between Iran and the United States. So far, what we've learned is that NATO countries have decided to withdraw from Iraq. Last night, the United States moved its troops from Iraq to Jordan because of pressure from the acts of resistance in Iraq. On the other hand, there's an article in **The Economist** saying that Washington has four possible courses of action regarding Iran, but all of them are bad for the United States. Looking at what's going on in the Middle East, what's your understanding? What do both sides—the Iranians and the Americans—have to bring to the table?

#Jacques

Well, first of all, just to go back to the wording here—I think it's important. There is no NATO in Iraq or in the Middle East. The Middle East is an out-of-area zone for NATO. NATO is an organization that was created for the defense of Western Europe, period. There was an exception in the case of Afghanistan, where they considered that the defense of the West was being carried out in the Hindu Kush, as the German defense minister said at the time—that was in 2001. You had this NATO operation that complemented the U.S. operation in that conflict, but that was rather exceptional. In Iraq, you had NATO countries involved—and it's very much the same thing in Ukraine—but we have NATO countries involved in a conflict, not NATO as an organization.

That's very important to say because it has totally different implications. NATO is a nuclear organization, while NATO countries operate at a bilateral level, if you want, or maybe just in a coalition. That's the difference between an alliance and a coalition. A coalition is an opportunistic gathering of countries for a specific purpose, while an alliance is an organization that encompasses, say, NATO or the EU. It binds a number of countries for the long run. So here, it's not really NATO

that is out of Iraq, but NATO countries. I think that's important to say. But in any case, beyond the wording, we see that even the relationships that you have traditionally between NATO countries among themselves...

And that's certainly, for instance, one of the reasons why you had Poles, Ukrainians, and others involved in Iraq in 2003. All these countries now understand that being with the U.S. is not necessarily a guarantee of security. They also understand that they may have diverging interests regarding the situation in the Middle East. You may have noticed that last week Donald Trump bragged that he wanted to open the Strait of Hormuz, and so on and so forth. After he realized he probably couldn't do it on his own, he asked several allied countries—Germany, France, the UK, Japan—and all of them declined to join. And we're not really talking about NATO here, but still, usually you have more cohesion among Western countries and Western members of NATO, if you will.

But today, the European countries understand that they have other objectives, other interests, and other issues at stake than just opening the Strait of Hormuz. They understand that this is a war initiated by the U.S., together with Israel. And nobody agrees, by the way, on who dragged the other into the conflict. Was it Israel dragging the U.S., or the U.S. dragging Israel into it? There are still diverging opinions on that. In any case, what is certain is that those two countries have started something they are not able to control today. And now they are trapped in their own situation—the situation they created—and therefore they are crying for help. The Western countries, especially the European ones, are not ready for this kind of engagement. They're not prepared for that.

They don't have the means to do it. Just look at the situation of the Royal Navy, for instance—they're not even technically able to provide combat ship support in the region. And the issue of sending a combat ship is only one aspect, because if you look at the Strait of Hormuz, as some people have said, it's essentially a kill box. When you enter the Strait of Hormuz, you're in an area so narrow that you're basically vulnerable to any kind of missile or small speedboat attack, even if you have the means to defend yourself. Nevertheless, you're extremely vulnerable.

The U.S. apparently had this experience with the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier, which was reportedly damaged by a drone or missile attack from the Iranians. This shows that the Strait of Hormuz is an area extremely difficult to control, and none of the European countries are in a position to help the U.S. effectively. And that's also a bit disturbing, because the U.S. started the problem, created the problem, and now that it's not able to manage it, they're trying to drag others into the situation they created. So, from a moral point of view, that's quite strange, in fact.

So that's where we are. Now, we're in a conflict that, as I already said on your program last week or the week before, was—well, I think there's no doubt anymore in the West—that this war was the result of a miscalculation. It was miscalculated by both the Israelis and the U.S. They believed Iran had been profoundly weakened by the 12-day war and that, because of what happened in January—the demonstrations—the government was also quite weak domestically. They thought it would take

very little to overthrow the whole government. That was definitely a misunderstanding, a misreading of the situation in Iran.

This is also something I remember very well from last year, right at the beginning of the 12-day war. You had so-called experts, especially in Switzerland, saying that 80% of the population was against the Iranian regime and that the regime wouldn't last long. And in fact, they claimed Israel had managed to dominate a country of 90 million people. Well, that wasn't the case last year, and it's certainly not the case this year. So again, we're seeing exactly what we saw in Ukraine—a misunderstanding of the strategic and operational situation on the ground that leads to underestimating the enemy and overestimating our own capabilities.

And there's this sense—and that's particularly true in the U.S. and Israel, by the way—that they have such a level of technology in their armed forces that it would guarantee success over the so-called "underdeveloped" Arab or, in this case, Iranian countries. And that's, I think, in Israel, a classic case, by the way. It's not the first time we've seen the Israelis underestimate their adversary. They've consistently made this kind of mistake. That was the case in 1973, notably. It was also the case in 2006, when they invaded South Lebanon. And again during the Gaza war in 2023, 2024, and up to now, by the way, when they anticipated they could completely dismantle Hamas within weeks. In fact, almost three years later, Hamas is still in control of the situation there.

And the same with Hezbollah, by the way. There have been several commissions in Israel to check what the intelligence mistake was—especially by Aman, the military intelligence. That's the equivalent of the DIA in the U.S., the GRU in Russia, or the GUR in Ukraine, for those who want a comparison. Aman is a very powerful intelligence service in Israel. It's the military intelligence, but it also handles cyber warfare, propaganda, censorship control, and all that. So it's extremely powerful—probably the most powerful intelligence organization in Israel. And the spy network, which people often confuse with it, is essentially the Mossad.

And they have a lot of spies all over the world—no question about that. They have a network of informants called, in Israeli terms, the Sayanim network. These are often ordinary Jews who aren't formally agents of the Mossad but serve as connections and provide information, let's put it that way. That kind of network is almost certainly operating in Iran as well, and it's probably the same type of network that can help pinpoint the location of people such as Khamenei or other generals or commanders. It's an extremely powerful human intelligence collection network, and it's very effective.

The problem is that once you have that amount of information collected around the world, you need to be able to collate it and transform it into something useful for your own decision-making. That's the whole work of analysis in intelligence. And that's where the Israelis are weak—extremely weak. Their main weakness comes from the fact that they have a very strong ideological stance within the

armed forces. And when you have ideology—well, ideology and intelligence cannot coexist. Intelligence must provide the most neutral, the most candid approach to a conflict, and give the broadest and most objective picture of it.

If you have ideology in that process, that means your picture will be biased. And you have some cognitive biases that exist in Israel in particular. That also relates to the fact that Israel has a very strong religious background, and the sense of superiority they have has an extremely strong impact on the way analysis is conducted. Ironically, that's also a source of failure in intelligence—and it's not new. Various commissions were set up after 1973, 2006, and after the different wars, including after 2024, this very short exchange of missiles you had.

#Jacques

Between Israel and Iran, all these commissions have identified the problem as an analytical issue. But again, what we have here is something that's extremely related to the cultural role of religious doctrine in the armed forces. And that's the reason why there's such a strong weakness. It's very interesting, by contrast, to see that in Iran, it doesn't seem that there's such a strong influence of ideology—or, let's say, this sense of ideology—in intelligence assessment. They don't, Carl. I can confirm they don't. I believe that.

I mean, I'm ready to believe that, because when I look at the decision-making—when I analyze the conflict in Iran and the way they make decisions—I assume that what we see on the ground, the pattern of responses Iran provides, illustrates the type of decisions that have been made. And from that, you can assess the quality of the decision-making. You can see that, in my view, the decision-making in Iran is of extremely high quality. And it's of high quality because it's not tainted by cultural biases. That shows—we have exactly the same thing in Russia, by the way.

And incidentally, we could even say the same for Hamas intelligence. When you look at Hamas's assessments during the Gaza war, and when you see the documents that were recovered, you can see that they had an extremely precise understanding of the situation and a very—how should I say—candid, not naive, but candid approach to the enemy. And that is actually the key to their success. It's not because you think you're better than the enemy that you'll win—at least at the intelligence level. The soldiers on the ground, that's another story.

But in the intelligence HQ, if you have people who think, "We'll win," and things like that—like when you listen to P-TECH—that's exactly what you don't want in an intelligence organization. They'll completely bias your approach and your understanding of a conflict, and that's exactly what leads to defeat. And that's probably what we see at play here, by the way, because when you have people like Trump or Pete Exet, and you listen to them bragging that they're so strong, that they have all the capabilities and are much better than the others—they already think they've won, and that kind of attitude leads to problems.

And we see—I mean, we can't decisively say who has won or lost this conflict. But intuitively, we get the impression that the Iranians have much better control over the battle than the Americans, especially when it comes to what's happening in Israel. You know, when you assess the battlefield, you have to understand how decisions are made. And I think here we're right at the center of the problem in the U.S.—this idea that if you're superior, you just are. You don't need to brag about it.

If you start bragging that you're superior, then that means you're not. And that's exactly what we're seeing, in fact. So, for the time being, in my view, the Iranians dominate the conflict, in the sense that they set or impose the rhythm of it. The Americans started the war—no doubt about that—but now it's the Iranians who decide what happens. And you can see that more and more, in the West, in Israel, and in the U.S., people are saying, "Well, we should stop this conflict." But Iran says, "No, we won't stop," because, as I've said many times, there are some similarities between the situation in Iran and the situation in Ukraine.

There is no incentive for Iran to stop the war at this stage, or at least no incentive to agree to a ceasefire, because they know that if there's a pause in the conflict, it will resume at some point in the future—and it will resume with even greater intensity. Therefore, for the Iranians, they have to take advantage of their, let's say, current success, if I can put it that way. They have to exploit that success and convert the operational success into a strategic one. And that's exactly what they're trying to do. Strategic success will be the point where the U.S. and Israel have to acknowledge that war with Iran is not a solution—that if they want security, they have to find other means than trying to destroy Iran. That will be the strategic success.

And in fact, this is exactly what Foreign Minister Araqchi has said several times: for now, there's no incentive for them to stop the war. They want to stop only when both Israel and the U.S. acknowledge that war is not a solution to the problem between them. So that's where we are. The U.S. hasn't recognized that yet—especially not at the higher levels of decision-making, namely Donald Trump, Pete Teixeira, and so on. They still think they can achieve some kind of success. But again, it's not about success yet; they don't even have a clear idea of what they want to achieve. At this point, they just want to find an excuse to stop the conflict without losing face. That's all. But the Iranians have a very clear objective: this war should be the last one.

#Nima

Colonel, from what I understand of the Iranian strategy so far, I see them in a similar position to where Russia was before the counteroffensive in September—if you remember, in September 2022. Back then, we saw a Ukrainian counteroffensive, and in the first hours or days, it was described as a huge success for the Ukrainians. Now, I'm not comparing Ukraine to Israel and the United States, but there are some similarities between the two situations. Why do I see it that way? Because the Ukrainian counteroffensive, to me, resembles this kind of attack they're talking about now—around

Khark Island, moving toward the Strait of Hormuz, or some island near there. But in the end, it's not about capturing a location; it's about whether you can sustain control of that location, hold that territory.

I don't see the United States and Israel being capable. Let's assume they're going to take, I don't know, Khark Island or some island in the Strait of Hormuz. They're not going to have the upper hand in the long run. Iran is going to hit them—and hit them hard. That's the problem. And the other point I see—Ukraine as, you know, the United States together with Israel, the same way Ukraine was before the counteroffensive—is the way Israel is escalating the war by attacking the oil refineries. Why do they need to do that? Why does the United States, Donald Trump, need to say, "In 48 hours we're going to attack your power grids"? It seems like they're not in a good position. That's why they want to escalate. They don't want to continue the war, but they escalate the war. Do you understand any of that?

#Jacques

Well, yes, I only partly share what you said. If we compare it with the Ukraine conflict, I'd compare the whole issue around Kharg Island to the Snake Island episode in Ukraine. And why do I say that?

#Jacques

Of course, Snake Island has absolutely no value whatsoever, while Kharg Island has some economic value. But that's not the issue here. The problem is that the Americans and the Israelis are trying to get a symbolic success. They cannot achieve a real operational or strategic success—they've understood that this isn't achievable. A true strategic success would be the overthrow of the regime, a regime change in Iran, a massive revolution, maybe even a revolution within the IRGC—something like that. That would be a strategic success. But there's no indication whatsoever that anything like that will happen in the near future. So they're just in search of some kind of success.

What could be qualified—what would qualify—as a success, or even the word "victory," to some extent? And that's probably the reason why they want to take Kharg Island now. It will happen exactly the same way the Russians handled the Snake Island issue. I mean, once those people set foot on that rock, they'll be bombed, period. And I'm convinced—and it's something they've already explained, by the way—that the Iranians are very keen to destroy the whole of Kharg Island rather than have a U.S. Marine base on that rock. Therefore, they would even sacrifice the entire oil terminal and everything there. That would be of no use to anyone. I mean, if they destroy the terminal, it will certainly affect the Iranian economy.

But that would certainly also have a lasting effect on the price of oil, and that would have very strong implications for the whole world economy, including the U.S. So for me, this whole Kharg Island thing is purely a PR exercise from the U.S. point of view. The Iranians are ready to make that sacrifice in order to avoid any military bridgehead on their territory. In Ukraine, what we had in

September 2022—some say it was the beginning of a counteroffensive—I don't think it was. In September and October 2022, both in the Kharkov and Kherson areas, the Russians did essentially the same thing they did in Kursk in 2024. They said, "Well, okay, they want to make an offensive."

We don't have a lot of troops in this area. That's something I had already demonstrated before September. Back in July 2022, in a map I presented, I showed that these were very weak sectors of the front on the Russian side. So the Russians didn't try to reinforce them. They didn't want to fight with inferior capabilities. Instead, they preferred to withdraw, wait for the enemy, and destroy them in a kind of kill zone. They turned the whole area—around Kharkov in September 2022, Kherson in October 2022, and then Kursk in 2024—into a very large kill zone.

#Jacques

In fact, the Ukrainians found themselves trapped in these areas. We know that because the Russian withdrawal happened days, even weeks, before the Ukrainian offensive. They prepared, they waited, they created a real kill zone. They left vast areas open to let the Ukrainians enter, and they had troops all around these zones to react with artillery fire and close air support to destroy those forces. That's exactly what happened on those three occasions. So it's a very different story from what we have in Iran.

But Kharg Island is probably, as I said, closer to the Snake Island issue. In any case, the idea that—you've seen Lindsey Graham bragging that the U.S. Marines can do that, that they have those Marine Expeditionary Units and are able to take over Kharg Island—the problem is always the same. Let's assume they take Kharg Island. So what? What's next? If you listen to Lindsey Graham, he said, "Well, then we have all the oil in it." But there's no oil on Kharg Island; it's just a terminal. So what? The Iranians would still let oil flow to the terminal even if it were occupied.

So, you know, this is the kind of childish approach to war that strikes me in the thinking. And we have exactly the same thing with the war in Ukraine on the Western side. We have a childish approach to things. We never see the strategic dimension of the conflict; we see the conflict as a tactical event. That's exactly why we lose. You know, if you take a look at the map and look at Kharg Island, it's close to the Iranian coast, very far from the Strait of Hormuz, by the way. So, first of all, this expeditionary force needs to reach the Strait of Hormuz, and then they have to reach Kharg Island, which is not obvious.

In some way, they can probably achieve that—let's assume so. But once they're there, what are they doing? What's the purpose? What can they achieve? And this is exactly the point: there is no strategic vision of the battlefield. We're talking about PR, because they see they can't achieve any kind of strategic objective, so they try to have an operational success. But again, the idea—or the ideal, I would say—when at war is to convert your operational success into a strategic success. That'

s exactly what the Iranians are trying to do and, in fact, are doing. As we have indications, they may achieve a strategic success in the way they strike Israel, because there will be a point, although there is no strategic combat by Iran inside Israel.

This is still operational. I mean, they still destroy command posts or radar stations, command and control or C4I installations, and things like that. Fine. But this may have, to some extent, a strategic impact. Essentially, though, these are operational successes. It will become a strategic success once Israel realizes that, once its potential has been destroyed, it will be extremely vulnerable—and that vulnerability will be so high that if they continue the fight, they will simply disappear. And that will be the point where Israel has to make a decision: do they want to continue the fight to the last Israeli, or do they want to preserve what's left of Israel and then ask for an agreement with Iran—an agreement that would, in fact, settle the conflict once and for all?

And that will guarantee the security of Israel and the security of Iran at the same time—provided, of course, that the West, the U.S., and Israel do not break the agreement they've signed, which is another topic we could obviously discuss. But without going into that aspect, the idea of operational success is that you can convert it, or use it, to achieve a strategic success. Taking hard guidelines has only a very, very limited effect. Personally, I don't see many ways you can turn this success into a strategic one. And that's the reason why—well, I don't know what will happen—but I can probably anticipate that if you have some kind of landing on the shore of Kargh Island, that island will be bombed and bombed and bombed.

And the Marines won't be able to do anything about that, because they'll be constantly bombed. They'll have to withdraw or die on the spot. If they don't have the ability to respond to those missile attacks, there's little chance they can achieve any strategic success based on that island. So that's why I see this as a kind of PR phase of the war. That's the only way the U.S. can more or less show some first prospect of success—if you want, just to convince people they're winning. But that's all. They'll just convince Westerners that they're winning, but that won't translate into the reality on the ground.

#Nima

Carl, what just happened moments ago—Donald Trump announced, "I'm happy to report that over the past two days, very successful negotiations have taken place between the United States and Iran. I have ordered all military strikes to be postponed for five days." And here's the thing: he's trying to manipulate the market by saying that, because the Iranian media immediately responded. The Iranian foreign minister said, "We deny what U.S. President Donald Trump said about negotiations between the United States and Iran. There are no direct or indirect talks between the two parties." So, you know, Donald Trump is making things up to somehow manipulate the market. As Bloomberg reported, Brent oil fell by 14% after Trump's statement about a temporary halt to strikes on Iran's energy infrastructure. As you said, it's all about PR—what's going on.

#Jacques

This is exactly what I'm telling you. We're in a PR phase of the conflict because, as of today, the issue that's been underestimated—well, they underestimated Iranian capabilities on one hand, but what they also underestimated, by the same token, is that since the conflict is taking longer to achieve any kind of success than anticipated, of course this has an impact on energy prices. And now they're playing with PR to try to keep the price of oil at a relatively stable level. But, you know, this idea of Trump having the illusion that he had communicated or negotiated with them—this isn't something new. We saw the same thing with Modi, the Indian leader, a few weeks ago, and last year as well, when Trump said he had negotiated with Modi, and Modi said, "Well, we never talked to each other."

Sometimes you wonder how this leadership works. Governance in the U.S. functions because, between fantasy and reality, there's a kind of fluid movement between the two. And therefore, you can't rely on what Donald Trump says. He doesn't even keep his promises—he promises punishment, destruction, whatever you want—and in the end, he's not able to do it. Maybe it's not opportunistic to do so, or maybe it's simply not doable, physically speaking, because he doesn't have the resources. So we're always somewhere between fiction and reality. We saw exactly the same thing with tariffs last year—it's the same pattern. He threatens 500% tariffs, and in the end, he knows it's impossible to implement that kind of decision because it would have far wider implications than he imagines.

And therefore, he promises us things that he's not able to hold. And that's the whole problem we have in the West: there is no consistent leadership, no consistent decision-making. Exactly what I said. And that, in fact, is part of the lack of credibility the West has at large. That's also beyond the fact of the double standards in everything. I mean, the loss of credibility of the West in this conflict adds to the loss of credibility in the conflicts in Ukraine and in Palestine, by the way. That just shows how the West has become weak. We're just able to brag that we're the best, with our values and everything, but in reality, we don't have the means to back up what we claim. And everybody starts—well, it started earlier, actually.

But I mean, people understand now that all of that is only PR. And that's exactly what we have. Notabene, when Trump suggests stopping or striking Iran, it just shows exactly what I said. Now they're trying to find an exit ramp, but they don't have one. The problem is—and that's something I already explained last week on your channel—that Iran cannot afford to have just a ceasefire. It's exactly the same situation as with Russia and Ukraine. That's why the idea of a ceasefire is not acceptable to the Russians, and it's not acceptable for the Iranians, because they know a ceasefire would only be imposed and the conflict or the war would resume later—in one month, two months, a year, ten years maybe.

But what the Iranians want—and the Russians also, in Ukraine—is to settle the conflict once and for all. They want a solution that will prevent any resumption of armed conflict in the near future. And

Iran is bound to that, because they know, from past experience, that Israel and the U.S. are not able to keep their word, to honor the signatures they put on a treaty. Therefore, for Iran, they don't need—or rather, they're not aiming to have—just a sheet of paper signed by Trump, Netanyahu, and so on. They need guarantees that the war will not come back, that it won't resume at some point. And that is extremely difficult to achieve.

And that means Iran will continue until Israel and the U.S. acknowledge that there's no other way to end the conflict than by accepting Iran's conditions. What we see today with Trump's declaration is exactly what I said: the U.S. is trying to drag Iran into a temporary ceasefire, and that's not what Iran wants. Iran wants a definitive solution to the conflict. Until both Iran and the U.S. understand that, we'll keep having this conflict. So Iran is determined to achieve a decisive victory. And when I say "decisive victory," the word "decisive" means that this victory should have a lasting impact—specifically, a definitive impact on U.S. and Israeli decision-making. That's why it's called a decisive victory: it's a victory that changes decisions. That's exactly what Iran is aiming for.

#Nima

Colonel, Iran hit two targets in Dimona and Arad, two important cities in Israel. Dimona is very important. They used just two missiles, no more than that, and both missiles hit their targets. It seems they were hypersonic missiles. Then Netanyahu came out. Before that, it seems two ballistic missiles were launched—aimed at Diego Garcia—and they were shot down by air defenses, by interceptors. After the attacks on Dimona and Arad, Netanyahu said they're capable of attacking all of Europe, so Europe should come to the battlefield and defend itself before it gets there. This was asked by an American reporter to Mark Rutte, the NATO Secretary General. They're trying to force Europeans to come to the battlefield. And here's what Rutte said.

#Speaker 03

What's sure is that they're very close to having that capability. In this case with the UK base at Diego Garcia, we're still assessing. But if it's true, it means they already have that capability. If it's not true, we know they're very close to having it. And that's exactly why, in Europe, most politicians feel that what the president is doing—taking out and degrading Iran's ability to once again export chaos, to spread chaos in the region and the world—resonates with them.

#Nima

Just to mention, I've seen no confirmation from the Iranians that they tried to hit Diego Garcia. I don't know what the reality is in that regard. You understand, right?

#Jacques

Well, you're perfectly right to explain that. In fact, there's even been, as I saw this morning, a denial from Iran that they tried to reach Diego Garcia. But coming back to Dimona—first of all, Dimona is simply Iran's response to the attack on Bushehr and Natanz by the Israeli-U.S. coalition. Natanz and Bushehr are two nuclear power sites, and of course, attacking those plants directly could create an existential risk for some populations—not for all of Iran, but for some. That's why Iran responded by attacking around the site of Dimona. Dimona is the oldest nuclear power center in Israel.

It's also the place where, apparently, the nuclear weaponry was designed and probably produced. I'm not aware of the details of that, to be honest. But the Iranians were very careful not to hit the power plant itself. They attacked objectives around it, showing that they have the capability to strike the power plant, but they didn't want to do it for obvious safety and security reasons. Now, this kind of targeting that we see from Iran—as opposed to the targeting by Israel and the U.S., which directly hit nuclear power infrastructure—is different. Iran, on the contrary, strikes around the structure to show its capability, but it doesn't want to cause the damage.

And if you look at how the Iranians have responded to the attacks in 2024 and 2025, you can see a very similar pattern. The Iranians have always struck places with military significance—targets important for the military—but they've avoided, for instance, destroying inhabited areas or civilian populations and things like that. On the U.S.–Israeli side, there's absolutely no consideration for the fact that they've killed civilians. They've even attacked—if I'm not wrong—13 schools and five or six hospitals in the first week of the U.S.–Israeli offensive, and there are already several hundred victims.

In the first week, there were something like 1,300 victims—probably more. I haven't seen the more recent figures. But anyway, you can see that the Iranians are extremely careful in planning their response. They want to show that they're able to strike, but they don't want to do it yet. That has an advantage, because it gives them the ability to escalate their response with the same missiles—just by striking a different place—which would allow Iran to escalate the conflict using exactly the same assets. And that's extremely clever. It's something the Israelis and the Americans can't do, because they've already struck politicians, populations, and civilian infrastructure. So that's certainly something we have to keep in mind.

Well, when talking—and that relates very much to the issue of Diego Garcia—even if we assume, as some have speculated (and again, I'm not able at this stage to say if it's right or wrong), that the attack against Diego Garcia was carried out using a Khorramshahr-4 missile, the idea is that instead of having the usual 1.8-ton warhead, they used a smaller warhead and a lighter payload. That way, the missile can travel farther—up to about 4,000 kilometers. Originally, the Khorramshahr was designed with a full payload for a range of 2,000 kilometers. I don't know what the truth is, but some people try to make a kind of linear deduction: if they can reach the Indian Ocean, then that means they can reach Paris.

I mean, that's typical propaganda—nothing else. Because again, as we've already said on your program, Iran has always responded, first, because they were attacked, and second, because they've targeted military assets—particularly in the Middle East, in those Arab countries that were hit by Iranian missiles. In fact, it wasn't the countries themselves that were hit, but the U.S. bases on their soil. The idea—and it makes sense from a military point of view—is that Iran responds to where the military capabilities that can reach them are located. So they respond to a military threat, wherever that threat comes from; they respond to those who strike at them. And as long as Europe doesn't engage in the conflict, there's absolutely no reason for them to fear anything from Iran.

So the logic here is that they just take the number of kilometers and say, well, if they can reach Diego Garcia, that means Paris is at risk. No—Paris is not at risk if Paris doesn't engage in the war, period. You see? And again, if you look at the way Iran does its targeting, you can see it's not based on fantasy. It's extremely well calculated, extremely well calibrated to the threat they receive. It's very carefully planned to strike where they need to strike, not just to impress the world. You see, that's very important to say. And that's something that, of course, the West cannot understand. And this declaration by Mark Rutte is very disturbing, I think, because it shows this intellectual weakness the West has in understanding how war is waged.

And that's exactly, in fact, what Mark Rutte says. He doesn't look at the conflict as it was waged by Iran. He just assumes that Iran does what the West does—because the West does this. They strike civilian populations, they strike civilian infrastructure, and they start wars. Because remember, in this case—and that's very interesting, by the way—if we come back to the joint communiqué of Germany, the UK, and France on the 1st of March this year, just after the first strikes from Israel and the U.S., this communiqué condemned the Iranian response and claimed that Iran attacked the Middle East, I mean, Arab countries of the Middle East. And none of that is true. Iran has the right to defend itself, and it defends itself against those bases from which the threat came.

So here you can see that Iran—this is why it's very important, as a military, to have a clear understanding of how the war is waged on both sides. You can see that Iran has an extremely rational approach to decision-making about how the war should be conducted, how targeting should be managed, in order to avoid unexpected escalation. The Iranians are able to keep their escalation capabilities under control, while I'm not sure the U.S. or the Israelis have the same ability to control theirs. So, in a certain sense, and also because of Iran's geographical situation and its own military capabilities, we can say that in this conflict, Iran has escalation dominance. And that's exactly what the U.S. and the Israelis are missing.

#Nima

Karol, before we wrap up—yesterday we heard the spokesperson for Ansar Allah in Yemen say they're prepared to join the fight. But so far, it seems we haven't seen anything coming from Yemen. They're waiting, waiting for the right moment to join in. Do you think they'll join the fight anytime soon?

#Jacques

Well, I don't know. Remember that the Houthis joined the conflict in 2023, after the 7th of October. But their purpose was very clear. Again, we have here an extremely rational decision-making process. The whole point of the Houthis engaging in the conflict was that they wanted to impose a ceasefire. They said, as long as there's no ceasefire in Gaza, we'll continue to strike. So the whole issue was motivated by the so-called responsibility to protect. In fact, what they did is in absolute accordance with the UN Charter. This is something we don't like to say in the West, but in reality, that's exactly what they did.

And once a ceasefire was signed regarding Gaza, they stopped launching missiles at Israel. Now, I don't know exactly what the criteria are for engaging in the conflict against Israel. I really don't know. But it also shows that the Houthis are not a proxy of Iran—same as Hezbollah, by the way. We always describe those entities as proxies of Iran, but technically speaking, that's wrong. They're not proxies. They're able to make autonomous decisions, and they choose to engage based on criteria they've defined as significant for themselves, not for Iran.

It may be that you have a convergence of interests, but I'd say that's more or less accidental, in the sense that the Houthis don't intervene because Iran wants them to. They intervene because they decide they want to help Iran or the Palestinians. It's exactly the same with Hezbollah, by the way. You may have overlapping interests, but that's not what drives the decision-making of either Hezbollah or the Houthis. They have their own regional and national objectives and act based on those. And that's why I can't say today whether the Houthis will join the war, because I don't even know what their criteria are.

They may define this in the future, or maybe I just haven't paid attention to it so far. But in any case, we see that it's an autonomous decision. That's very important to understand. It also means that other countries may eventually have a similar reaction to that of the Houthis. So we're in a situation where I don't think we're moving toward World War III, personally. But we might well be heading toward a more extended regional war. That's, in my view, something that might be possible. But again, I have no indication so far to assert that—this is still speculation, and there's no proof of it at this stage. So that's what I think. Hezbollah, of course, has been attacked by Israel, and there is still a substantial Israeli presence in Lebanon.

Remember that we already had a ceasefire in 2024 that called for the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Lebanon. The Israelis have not complied with this agreement so far, and therefore you have a response from Hezbollah. There had probably been a temporary weakening of Hezbollah—they denied this, but it's reasonable to say there was some kind of temporary weakness in the command structure, at least, and things like that. Nevertheless, it seems now that Hezbollah has regained its combat capabilities, and they are firing at Israel. So Israel is now facing two fronts: one toward Iran and a second toward Lebanon.

We may have an expansion of operations within— I mean, I don't know if the Palestinians would take the opportunity to expand their struggle in this context, and hence also have the support of the Houthis. I don't know about this, but I would say that if I were Israeli, I would consider the current situation extremely dangerous, because it's a temptation for all these countries that are unhappy with Israel or its decision-making. It's a situation of weakness in which Israel is probably not easily, but still more vulnerable, and could more easily be defeated in such a situation than in a normal one. So it's at least temporarily a situation of vulnerability in Israel, and some could take advantage of that.

#Nima

Thank you so much, Karol, for being with us today. A great pleasure, as always.

#Jacques

That's my pleasure. Thank you for inviting me again.

#Nima

You.