

Col. Jacques Baud: What a US Ground Invasion of Iran Would REALLY Look Like

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Monday, March 30th, 2026. And our dear friend, our brother, Col. Jacques Baud, is here with us. Welcome back, Colonel.

#Jacques

Yeah, thank you very much. Hi, everybody. Thanks for inviting me again.

#Nima

Carol, let me start with one of these articles in the New York Times. It mentions that the number of American military personnel in the Middle East has exceeded 50,000. When it comes to these numbers—4,000, 50,000, 12,000—if the United States decides to invade Iran, to go to one of these islands in the Persian Gulf, close to the Strait of Hormuz, is that possible with these numbers? Because, if I remember correctly, during the war in Ukraine, when it comes to a ground invasion, you need some sort of dominance—three to one, you know, when you attack. But when it comes to an island, that could be different. Capturing an island is one thing, but sustaining and keeping it is important as well, not just capturing it for a short period of time and taking a lot of casualties. What's your understanding of the way Donald Trump is talking about invading? It seems they're serious and going in that direction.

#Jacques

Well, it depends very much on what the U.S. has in mind—and what Trump has in mind. As you rightly said, if it's about taking over a couple of islands, and you have a couple of islands in the Strait of Hormuz like Lesser Tomb, Greater Tomb, Abu Musa, and those kinds of small islands, they could probably be taken very quickly by a small force. And they could probably even be held for a while with those forces. The same applies to Harg Island—it might be possible for some trained units to gain a foothold there and stay for a while. The problem is, when you talk about invading Iran, that's a completely different story. Those islands—first of all, if you have them, you have to figure out what you want to do with them.

If the purpose of holding those islands is to maintain free traffic through the Strait of Hormuz—I'm talking about the three, the Lesser and Greater Tunb and Abu Musa, for example—you can probably stay there for a while. But again, the problem is that the Iranians, because of their superiority in

missiles and all that, make it uncertain that a U.S. force could maintain its presence for very long. They could probably be decimated very quickly by missile strikes. And apparently, Iran is not ready to let such a force stay on those islands for long. On Kharg, the problem is slightly different because, of course, it's an oil terminal of huge importance for Iran, with significant economic value.

Now, my feeling is—and I've read this somewhere, though I'm not sure if it's official policy—but I would expect, if I were American, that the Iranians would prefer to destroy the entire potential of Kharg Island rather than let the U.S. stay there. In fact, if you think about it, if you have a force that can install itself on the island and keep control over the oil terminals, you've essentially lost that terminal anyway. So it's the same price for you to destroy everything. In that case, I don't see exactly what the U.S. is aiming for by keeping those forces there, because it's probably more of a PR exercise than anything else.

We had similar issues, remember, probably at the very beginning of the Ukraine war with the so-called Snake Island, which was just a rock close to the Romanian border, off the Romanian shore. The Ukrainians took this rock, had a presence there, then surrendered, and the Russians left it empty. But then the Ukrainians came back and claimed a victory over the Russians by taking it back. The Russians just bombed the rock and, in fact, annihilated everything on it. So we may have something very similar at play with those islands in the Persian Gulf. But when it comes to an invasion of Iran, that's a totally different story, and I'm not sure exactly what a force of 50,000, even 100,000 people, could really achieve there.

Because, first of all, an occupation is not just a matter of force ratio. It's about how you sustain your presence on the ground in such a country. Especially in Iran, by the way, because it's a huge country. When you have a force that requires a lot of logistics, how can you afford to do that—especially if the Iranians have, as I said, superiority in terms of missiles, drones, and all that? So I'm not sure exactly what the Americans could achieve. They could probably manage to get a bridgehead and some presence, but I'm not sure they could achieve any significant operational or even strategic success in Iran.

So I think everything we've heard—and again, I don't know what's in Donald Trump's mind—but my feeling is that what we're seeing at this stage is more of a PR exercise than a real and imminent danger for Iran. It's probably an imminent danger for the U.S., if I can put it that way, rather than for Iran. Invading Iran would require a huge amount of forces, and remember, the Americans already tried something in 1980 with Operation Eagle Claw, when they had this special operation to rescue the hostages from the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. They used several C-130 aircraft and helicopters specially designed for special operations.

And this operation failed miserably. You can probably still see the remnants of that catastrophe, because some helicopters crashed and one or two C-130 aircraft also went down in the desert, killing many soldiers. I'm not aware myself, since I haven't been to Iran, but apparently the site still exists and can be visited to some extent—I don't know exactly. In any case, it shows that no matter

how much power you have, or how skilled your special operations and airborne forces are, it's very hard to carry out such a mission in that kind of country. In this case, among other things, there were clearly planning problems.

There were also coordination problems within the U.S. forces because they wanted to keep the whole thing secret. So the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing, and that led to the catastrophe. Another issue related to the complexity of the operation was the distances—because Iran is huge. They wanted to land their planes in a very quiet place, with not too many people around to see or witness anything. That meant they had to go very far away, and the distances were a challenge in themselves. And, OK, if the U.S. wanted to invade Iran, it would certainly not be the same kind of operation.

But you still have some elements of that that would affect a possible—or let's say a planned—invasion, because of the distances and the kind of terrain. If you look at the map, you'll see that the whole shore, I mean, yes, all the part of Iran that's close to the Persian Gulf, is very mountainous. That means that in those places you could have guerrilla warfare. You could make life absolutely impossible for any invading force. This is a situation you barely had in Iraq, which is essentially a very flat country, except up in the north. In Iran, it would be a very different story, because to reach Tehran you have to go through very difficult terrain, where it's easy to ambush and stop vehicles.

I don't see exactly how they would do that. It would require hundreds of thousands of soldiers and a huge logistical capability. And of course, they'd be under the constant threat of drones, missiles—short-range, long-range, and mid-range missiles. Those that can reach Israel would keep being fired. So I don't see what the benefit of such an operation would be. We still don't see the benefit of it at this stage, and I'm not sure that escalating this operation and trying to turn this aggression into an invasion would benefit either side.

#Nima

Israel and the U.S.—what would be the way out, in your opinion, for Donald Trump? Because it seems to me that, as time goes by, Iran is getting stronger, since Iran is defending itself. Iran is not attacking anybody. That's why they're so comfortable, as time goes by, defending Iran—they know what they're doing. But the United States and Israel are attacking, and they're talking about invading Iran. There are two different scenarios: one on the part of the United States, and one on the part of the Iranians. But what would be the way out for Donald Trump? You see the way he talks about the situation—you can sense a lot of desperation in how he's speaking about it. What's your understanding of Donald Trump's current situation? It seems he's made some sort of trap for himself in West Asia.

#Jacques

Well, same thing for Netanyahu, in fact. Both are trapped by their decisions, and they're trapped in their arrogance and hubris because they expected a very quick success—a fast victory. But that's not happening. Despite the experience they had during the 12-day war in 2025, they didn't learn the lessons from that war. And today they're still fighting, thinking they might achieve some kind of success. The problem is, the longer it takes, the harder it becomes to define what "success" even means. Because what we see right now in Iran is not just that Iran is defending itself, but that it's also consolidating. Over time, the population is becoming more united than before.

We see that they're still going, because they're not just firing missiles—they're also producing more of them. So this is kind of a... the system, the machinery, the military-industrial complex in Iran is moving ahead. They're producing missiles, they're producing other equipment, and they're getting more support—political support, I mean—from outside, and probably even more technical support. I'm not sure exactly what kind, but I'd expect they're getting some help from Russia and, in some form, from China. The point is, the Iranians are not isolated—they're becoming less and less isolated. And you can see that even in the Gulf: at first, people reacted by saying they wanted to fight against Iran.

And now they realize that this probably isn't the wisest thing to do. They're now calling for dialogue and for appeasement in the region. You see the same thing in the U.S., basically. The U.S. understands that it overestimated the probability of success, and now it's not achieving that. So we're in the same situation as in Ukraine. The obvious solution would be to have talks with the Iranians. But Trump and his administration aren't used to having talks—they impose a solution. That's exactly what they just did with this 15-point plan. They come in, put the 15 points on the table, and say, "Take it or leave it," more or less. That's what they did for Gaza, and it's what they tried to do with Russia last year with that 20-point plan.

And it didn't work, because now they have adversaries who are able to respond—and confident that they can respond. Therefore, a negotiation today can't just be a simple proposal you can't refuse. It has to be a dialogue, and the solution must come from both parties in a real, diplomatic kind of dialogue, where each side says what it wants to achieve. The problem is, the longer you wait for that, the more Iran will gain influence, and the more the U.S. will lose influence. And we already see that, because as of today, it's the U.S. that comes up with a plan—they feel they can achieve something, but they want to stop the whole thing.

They want to save face, and so they try to impose something. But they're the ones trying to stop the machinery. And that's exactly the problem, because Iran has basically refused this dialogue, saying, "If you want to have a dialogue, you need to come with responsible proposals." And what they want is—not a ceasefire, not just opposition—it's almost exactly the same thing you have with Russia. They don't want a ceasefire; they don't want just to oppose. They want a real solution. Iran has been threatened for about three decades now, to be attacked by both Israel and the U.S. Now Iran wants to put a final stop to this whole process. And now it has the opportunity.

Trump has given Iran the opportunity to bring this to a full stop, and that's exactly what Iran will strive for. The longer Trump waits, the more advantage Iran will gain, and the less freedom of decision the U.S. will have. We see exactly the same thing with Ukraine. That's why, on both sides, Vladimir Putin said, "Well, if you don't want to negotiate, no problem—we'll continue. We'll achieve what we want through force." And you have the same kind of response from Foreign Minister Araghchi and others in Iran. They say, "If you don't want to address the fundamental issue of the problem, and if you don't want to move toward a definitive peace, then we'll continue."

And the price for that—and that's something I said even before the war, when we discussed it on your channel, more than two months ago—I said, well, the price of an attack, what's at stake then, is the existence of Israel. Because obviously Iran cannot destroy the U.S., but it can destroy Israel. It probably wouldn't destroy the population, but it could make life in Israel absolutely impossible. And we already see signs of this. So the thing is, the longer the U.S. and Israel wait for any political solution, the more leverage Iran will have over them. And that's exactly where we are. In essence, we may see some tactical success from the U.S.-Israeli coalition, in the sense that they can probably destroy a few command centers and bomb a few places in Iran.

These are tactical issues, but they have no strategic impact. We've seen that, for instance, killing Ali Khamenei was essentially a tactical success, but not a strategic one, because it didn't affect Iran's ability to make decisions or continue fighting. So in that sense, killing Khamenei was a tactical success, but not a strategic one. And Iran—if you look now at the balance between the two—you can see that. And as usual, that's something I've also noticed in the Ukrainian conflict, and you see it in all the wars the West has waged over the last 30 years: we fight wars at the tactical level, while others fight at the strategic level.

And even the terrorists, in fact, have waged wars at the strategic level. It was less successful because, fortunately, they have less power. But nevertheless, they were not completely defeated. And in fact, that's exactly what we see when we talk about defeating ISIS. For instance, the U.S. never managed to defeat ISIS—it just changed its form, changed its name, changed its appearance. But the spirit of the whole thing has not disappeared. So all the wars we wage are tactical wars. And now, with Iran, the U.S. is confronted with a new situation. It hasn't really appeared before, because the U.S., if you look at its global reach and capabilities, is obviously much stronger.

But if you look just at the Middle East theater, you know, the balance of forces is more or less there. So the U.S. is a peer—and even Iran, even Israel, who used to think they were superior to Iran, have noticed they are not. Meaning we have here a very balanced theater of operations, if you want. And that's exactly the kind of situation the U.S. has never faced in the last 30 years, and probably even longer. So now they're confronted with a force they cannot defeat, at least not in the short term. Maybe if this lasted for 20 years—well, maybe not 20, maybe one or two years, I don't know.

What I mean is that Iran cannot be defeated in the short run, as was anticipated by the U.S.-Israeli coalition. And that makes Iran much stronger—a very credible actor in the Middle East. When I say

“credible actor,” I mean that now a few Arab countries may understand it’s probably a good idea to have good relations with Iran. Instead of having U.S. bases that attract fire on Europe, it’s probably better to have a deal with Iran. So that’s the situation: the U.S. is on the path to a strategic defeat, and Iran is on the path to a strategic victory. We can summarize it that way.

#Nima

Carl, I think the key issue, as you mentioned, is these American bases in the Middle East. Many people right now are wondering if some sort of attack is coming soon—it’s been 30 days of war. But Iran has basically destroyed most of the radars, many of the radars, in the Middle East. So what’s the point of keeping these bases in those countries? I think many people are asking themselves that. For example, in Japan, in South Korea—even the head of the IFD was talking about how American troops should leave Germany. Because what’s the point of having American troops and bases in your country if that only brings chaos and problems instead of giving you some kind of security? These are huge and important questions that all these nations are asking themselves.

#Jacques

Well, that’s the whole question. In fact, I raised it already two or four years ago—sorry—when Sweden and Finland were contemplating, and later joined, NATO. It’s essentially the same question. The point is that when you have a base on your territory and you allow the U.S., in that case, to use those bases in a war of aggression, then by law you can be considered an aggressor. This is under UN Resolution 3314 of December 1974, which defines what constitutes aggression.

#Jacques

I think it’s Article 3F—maybe I’m wrong—but I believe that’s the one that says when you allow your territory to be used as a base to attack others, you can be considered an aggressor. That’s something nobody really noticed until now. And now, when we see, for instance, Iran responding to the attack by destroying U.S. military assets on those bases, we also see attacks on other targets within those territories. Everyone was surprised. Even in Europe, people were saying, “Well, Iran is bombing those countries too.”

And so, the fact of the matter is that once those countries have allowed the U.S. and Israel to use their airspace, their bases, and their intelligence assets—things like that—in order to carry out an act of aggression, they can be considered aggressors. Therefore, Iran has the right to respond in those territories. That’s exactly why you have Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia suffering from that, because they are, in fact, aggressors. De jure—that means by law—they are aggressors, even if it wasn’t their planes but they allowed the use of their infrastructure. So when you realize this, you should ask yourself: what’s the purpose of those bases?

Because during the Cold War—we've discussed that several times—we expected, or at least we were concerned, that the Marxist system, the Warsaw Pact, and all that could invade Western Europe. You had this face-to-face situation between the so-called liberal economic system and the Marxist, or let's say communist, bloc. And of course, then it made sense to have U.S. bases in Europe—not as bases to attack, but as bases to ensure the U.S. would be committed. Because during the Cold War, the problem the West, the Europeans, had was that if there was a war, they had no guarantee the U.S. would intervene or support them. The NATO treaty doesn't actually oblige members of the alliance to respond together in case of war.

They are not obliged; they can choose. The purpose of the alliance was to provide support—a nuclear umbrella. That was the real aim of the whole thing. But it doesn't oblige the U.S. to send troops. The problem was that if the U.S. responded with atomic bombs in Europe, they could end up destroying the whole continent without suffering the consequences themselves. So the idea was that the U.S. had to be committed to some extent—they needed to have troops there as a guarantee. The guarantee wasn't so much about destroying the Soviet Union; it was about ensuring that the U.S. would be committed to the defense of Europe. That's why you had that presence.

And that's why, by the way, after the Cold War, when you had those occupation forces in western Germany—the British, French, and U.S. forces as the victors of World War II—they were there as an occupation force. After the end of the Cold War, the French and the British withdrew their forces from Germany, but the U.S. didn't. The reason they didn't isn't, as some might say, because of imperialism or anything like that. The real reason the U.S. kept its forces there was that the Europeans wanted them to stay as a guarantee that the U.S. would be involved in any conflict. That would serve as a kind of commitment by the U.S. to the defense of Europe. And that's the rationale. Now, in the case of Europe, that was the situation during the Cold War.

#Nima

What has changed, you know, in the Europeans' calculations that's leading to these kinds of arguments right now?

#Jacques

Well, today the problem is totally different. We're trying to revive the idea that Russia could invade Europe and all that. That's the whole point. The purpose of this narrative is to keep the U.S. in Europe, to keep that commitment. But in essence, after the Cold War, we could have withdrawn the Americans from there. And the same applies to all the other countries with a U.S. military presence around the world. I'm not sure that North Korea still has the ambition to invade South Korea. In fact, North Korea has made several attempts to have a dialogue with South Korea. The South Koreans also tried. Trump even tried, and that was just prevented by some neocons in the U.S. During his first term, Donald Trump, you may remember, tried to have a dialogue with North Korea.

And I think the North Koreans would welcome such an agreement—or a *détente*, if you prefer that word. The same applies to others. Why do we still have such a large U.S. military presence in Japan, for example? That made sense during the Cold War because of the Soviet Union. Today, the forces in Japan are probably more related to China. But is China really a military threat? Probably not. China is a continental power, not a maritime one, even though it has now developed a fairly substantial fleet to protect its own shores because of the threat from the U.S. But essentially, the issue with China is economic—maybe financial, maybe trade-related, and so on.

But I don't see any real military threat coming from China, even though there's a lot of propaganda about it. In any case, the U.S. has the most aggressive stance toward all these countries. That means when you host such bases and such a military presence, you have to expect that you might be seen as an aggressor. That's definitely true for the Japanese, and for all the countries that have accepted foreign military forces on their territory. And that's probably something that will help reshape the landscape of the Middle East after this conflict. Again, I can't anticipate that, because I don't know exactly what the Americans want to do.

But the fact of the matter is that, as of today, it's become extremely clear to the whole world that having bases on your territory and allowing the U.S. to do whatever they want from those bases can have consequences for your own country. And this is even more important for many of these countries, because today all the adversaries that we—or the West, as Peter said—face have missiles that you can't stop. That applies to Russia, to Iran, obviously to China, and also to Yemen. And that's exactly the problem. Now, if you are an ally—an active ally—of the U.S., then you expose yourself. And that may be something that helps reshape the relationships you have in the Middle East and the balance of forces that may emerge at the end of this conflict.

#Nima

Carl, I think what's happening, when it comes to the situation in West Asia and the way Iran sees the future, is that Iran doesn't want the United States in the region. They've said that to several of the Arab states in the Persian Gulf. But right now, in Iran, they're talking about the NPT. So, what's the use of the NPT if it can't protect them from this kind of aggression by Israel and the United States? In parliament, I think they're going to vote on it soon, and most probably they're going to leave the NPT. The head of the IAEA was even asked if he sees what's going on.

The attack on Iran is against international law. He avoided answering that—he didn't respond at all. And he said the only way you can destroy Iran's nuclear program is to nuke them. Now, this is the head of the IAEA—someone people would expect to be a voice of sanity in the whole case—but he seems to be the total opposite. How do you see the nuclear program and the behavior of the IAEA? In Iran, they're calling him a Mossad or CIA agent. They don't care about the IAEA anymore. What do you make of that?

#Jacques

Well, you know, this is the whole issue. In fact, we're back to the question of the international law-based order versus the international rules-based order. When you have a law-based order, it means there's a law and everyone has to abide by it. The mistake we've made for decades with Israel is allowing it to have nuclear weapons without being subject to the safeguards of the IAEA. That, I think, is a big mistake. And here the IAEA— not just the current director, but all the predecessors as well—bears a lot of responsibility, because we've known from the very beginning that allowing Israel to have nuclear weapons creates an imbalance in the region. That wasn't so critical decades ago, when Arab countries hadn't yet reached the level of development they have today.

And therefore, we didn't— I mean, nobody paid much attention to these Arab forces. Today, the problem is very different because you have, for instance, Saudi Arabia. It has no nuclear weapons, but it does have some nuclear technology and some ballistic missile capabilities. Pakistan has offered Saudi Arabia, in case of war, to provide nuclear weapons. And this would be without any control from the IAEA. So that means some countries now have the ability to obtain nuclear weapons even if they're not under the IAEA safeguard system. The same applies to Iran. I mean, there were some rumors— I don't know if they're substantiated or not— that North Korea could provide nuclear weapons to Iran.

I don't know if it's real or not, but it shows that the whole issue of nuclear weapons should be, in my view, ideally—well, I'm not sure it's technically or realistically possible today—but we should have all the actors around the table and discuss it, to renegotiate the whole issue. The NPT was originally negotiated to keep nuclear power within those who were essentially the winners of World War II. In reality, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council were all military nuclear powers, and they wanted to keep that more or less within that circle. They didn't want nuclear weapons to spread outside it. Today, obviously, that changed—starting with India and Pakistan, and of course Israel and North Korea.

So we see that we have a lot of actors who have access to nuclear technology. In my view—ideally, and I underline twice the word "ideally"—it would be to bring together all those who have access to nuclear technology, to sit around the table and decide on a new treaty that everybody would abide by. There were several attempts to bring in Israel, because Israel, among all the countries that have nuclear capabilities today, is the only one that has shown extremely aggressive behavior. It's a country that has attacked all its neighbors since 1948. And obviously, this is also a country with regional ambitions—regardless of how big the idea of "Greater Israel" might be, it has that kind of ambition. And therefore...

#Nima

Colonel, sorry for interrupting you. The concept of Israel—because they have the Samson Option—you know, when you have a country like Israel behaving like that, attacking almost every country in the region... Normally, nuclear weapons are meant to defend yourself, to serve as a deterrent. But

Israel is using them offensively—attacking countries, saying, “If you attack us, we’ll attack you, we’ll kill you. And if you attack us, we’ll use nuclear weapons against you.” Exactly. This is the problem with Israel. Other countries, I think...

#Jacques

This is it. Despite the tensions you may have from time to time between Pakistan and India, we’ve seen that they are extremely rational actors. Even last year, when there was that border issue, both reacted in a very rational way, if you will. With Israel, it’s obviously different. There are other motivations—it’s not exactly religious, but it has religious roots, if I can put it that way. It’s more complex than that in Israel. But in any case, this is a country that’s very unpredictable in its use of force, nuclear force, or nuclear capabilities. And that’s why, I mean, the international community—and especially the U.S.—should have exerted more influence on Israel to convince its different governments to enter the IAEA safeguard regime.

But they haven’t done that. And today we’re living with this sword hanging over the heads of the people in the Middle East. I think more and more now, the Middle East—and the powers in the Middle East—have the ability to respond to Israel. They have means that, in the 1960s, they didn’t have. Back then, Israel had nuclear power, so they could impose their will on others. But today it’s very different, because if you have Pakistan providing nuclear weapons to Saudi Arabia, or North Korea—or whoever—giving nuclear weapons to Iran or Saudi Arabia, that means Israel could probably launch a couple of nuclear bombs on Iran, but you’d only need a couple of nuclear bombs on Israel to completely destroy the country. And they have to realize this.

And they also have to realize that this security policy based on the use of force, as I usually call it—this “security by confrontation”—should be abandoned in Israel. They should move toward security through cooperation. They need to stop thinking they can impose their will by force and understand they could achieve better long-term success by having good relations with their neighbors. And again, there is absolutely no reason whatsoever to have a conflict with Iran. The issue of the NPT for Iran today—and I would say even last year—was already raised, that the U.S. and Israel at that time created the conditions for Iran to withdraw from the NPT. We mentioned that already a year ago. Today, it’s even clearer for Iran that if they had a nuclear weapon, their relations with the U.S. and Israel would probably be better.

So it’s a pity, if you consider the word “proliferation.” But proliferation—if we see that Iran is an extremely rational actor—I’m not so worried. I wouldn’t be worried, let’s say, about Iran having nuclear weapons, because so far they’ve behaved in an extremely rational way. And that’s probably the solution: to bring more rationality into the balance of the whole region. So we probably—and that might be one of the lessons of this conflict—see that, in the end, because one of the actors, namely Israel, is irrational and has too much power under its control, it’s probably good to have a real balance of force, and therefore to have nuclear capabilities in order to be able to deter Israel from using its force.

And not just to deter Israel from using nuclear force, but also to deter Israel from using even conventional force. Because obviously, Israel is a country that has tried to expand itself over the last 80 years or so, meaning this trend toward expansion is probably not over. Israel will continue on that path. And if Israel faced adversaries with nuclear capabilities, the Israelis would probably think twice about this strategy. They had a strategy established in the '50s and '60s based on dominance and so on. They could achieve dominance at that time. Today, it's different—but it must not be just different in words; it should also be different in facts.

And that is probably why I could expect that Iran might withdraw from the NPT. Remember, there's also something very telling: Iran—or rather, Ali Khamenei—had issued a fatwa against the use and possession of nuclear weapons. Now he's dead, and we know that his son, who took over, is a hardliner. He may revoke that fatwa and issue another one that allows Iran to have such weapons. So, in essence, Israel has just eliminated the only person who was the guarantor of Iran not having a nuclear weapon. That's the paradox of this situation. And maybe having a real balance of force in the region is probably necessary, because there was too much imbalance in favor of the U.S. and Israel, I would say. So... yeah.

#Nima

Carl, before wrapping up, I think we've seen something, in some ways, quite positive in Europe since the war against Iran started. It means that we have a country—Spain, for example—standing its ground and saying to the United States, “No, we're not going to be part of this. We're not going to help you. It doesn't matter.” And when they were threatened with sanctions, the president of Spain said, “We don't care, because we know what we want.” This is a new kind of policy, a new attitude on the part of Spain, I would say. We haven't seen that before. Do you think this sort of attitude is going to grow, to get stronger across Europe? Because we know people are not happy with the current situation in Europe, and with the wars in Ukraine and now in the Middle East—basically, both wars are hurting Europe's economy.

#Jacques

Well, first of all, you have to remember that Spain has also had a kind of pioneering attitude regarding Palestine, for instance. It has supported the Palestinians very strongly. Now, when we talk about Europe, of course, we keep hearing what Brussels says about Russia, Russia, Russia. But if you look at the map of Europe, you'll see that the countries on the Mediterranean Sea—and that applies very much to Spain, which is only a few kilometers from Africa—have a lot of migrants and historical ties with African and Muslim countries. Spain, of course, has other priorities than, say, Estonia or Latvia. For Estonia and Latvia, the Baltic states, their attention is essentially focused on Russia. I'm not sure that's very rational, but that's the way they see things.

And on the other side of Europe—on the diagonal, so to speak—you have Spain, which is very close to the Muslim world and has a different perception of its relations with other continents. That probably explains why Spain is, or has to be, very cautious about this attitude we have in Europe of labeling countries as the bad guys and the good guys. That's probably also why Spain is leaning toward a more neutral stance in this conflict. The example of Spain prohibiting the U.S. from using its air bases on Spanish territory to attack Iran is just what I mentioned earlier about Resolution 3314. When you allow another country to use your territory or assets to attack a third country, you become an aggressor as well—and that's certainly not what Spain wants to be.

#Nima

Sorry for interrupting you. We had the same sort of issue raised in Germany. They were talking about how, if they let the United States use their territory to attack Iran, they'd become part of it—you know, they'd face the consequences of what they were doing.

#Jacques

Exactly. And, you know, the thing is that the conflict in Iran has, in fact, highlighted this problem, because so far it was always the others who were attacking—I mean, Russia attacking and so on. And of course, the situation was much less clear than it was on the 28th of February, when there was a clear attack out of the blue from the U.S. and Israel. And they even acknowledged that it was an unprovoked attack. So now we understand exactly what the Americans—especially under the Trump administration—are doing, because he has this kind of irrational behavior that may drag other people into a war.

And it's very interesting, by the way—you may remember, two weeks ago, when Trump wanted to open, or rather keep open, the Strait of Hormuz, he asked several countries to help the U.S. by sending their navies to keep the strait open. Then, after a while, all these countries refused because they realized they'd be dragged into a conflict. The idea of the U.S. is very simple: they want to put the Europeans on the front line, and then the U.S. would withdraw. And that's exactly—this is exactly—what the U.S. basically did in 2014 and 2015 with ISIS. You know, just a week ago we marked the ten-year anniversary of the bombings here in Brussels by the Islamic State.

They carried out bombings at the Brussels airport and in the subway here ten years ago. The reason it happened was because Belgium had been involved in the conflicts in Iraq and Syria. Before that, Belgium had never been active in the region. So suddenly they were dragged into it—the U.S. asked, and Belgium followed the French, as they usually do. When the French do something, Belgium follows very blindly. And the price for this was those terrorist attacks. This is exactly what the U.S. wanted, because the U.S. didn't need to send its own forces. You see, they didn't need them. The European forces in Iraq and Syria carried out something like seven percent of all the strikes, but the U.S. nevertheless asked the Europeans to join.

So they had somebody else to put on the front line. And in fact, the terrorist attacks happened in France and Belgium, a little bit in Germany, in Sweden, and so on. There were a few attacks, but only a few in the U.S. Most of the attacks happened in France, for example. So this is exactly what the U.S. does: they start a war, they start a problem, and then they ask others to help them—and then they hide behind their allies. And the allies are the ones who face the consequences of this conflict, namely terrorism, immigration, and all that. You see, this is exactly the problem.

So the U.S. plays a very cynical role there, and the Europeans are stupid and naive enough to play along with the Americans. Obviously, it's even more complex with people like Trump, who can change his mind overnight. That makes the whole, let's say, crisis management at large extremely complicated from a Western point of view, because we never know exactly what will happen. The U.S. starts things, doesn't know how to get out of them, and then asks others to solve the problem. This is the kind of relationship we have today in the West, and that's something we never had during the Cold War.

This is very interesting. We never had such a situation during the Cold War. And today we see this trend of the U.S. to make war anytime, everywhere, and so on. Once it was done in Iran, now they want to start in Cuba and things like that. Again, even though Trump was elected with the idea that he would focus on developing his own country instead of spending money on wars, you can imagine that in the first month of war they spent \$50 billion. I saw a program with a Belgian analyst who said, "Well, with \$50 billion, China builds 2,500 kilometers of high-speed rail."

#Jacques

You see? The money you spend on such a stupid war is money you can't spend on other, more useful purposes. And that's exactly the same thing we have in Europe. We have elites who are not able to see far into the future, who have no vision, who react on a day-to-day basis, and who lack a proper, deep understanding of conflicts. We're just getting involved in conflicts that make absolutely no sense, that only make us spend money on totally useless things. We destroy a region instead of building something, and we're not helping anything. You see, if you wanted to have a safe Strait of Hormuz, the best thing to do would be to make peace with Iran.

You don't need to send your cruisers or destroyers or whatever there. Have good relations with Iran. Stop the stupid sanctions that haven't provided any benefit to anybody—they've just destroyed international trade and potential markets for Europeans or even the U.S. What is the benefit of having Iran sanctioned? None. Absolutely none. Zero. We didn't even improve our security, even though the Americans felt they had to attack Iran because they felt threatened by a country that's been sanctioned for 40 years. So you see, all we do is nonsense. And therefore, we continue with policies that waste money. And you see that the U.S. already has a huge debt problem, and this will obviously continue with the conflict.

And because they're too arrogant to acknowledge that they made a mistake, that it was a bad decision to enter into conflict with Iran, they'll continue—at least for a while—spending even more money and taking it away from where it's needed. You know, if you look at Venezuela, Cuba, Iran, even North Korea, what's the benefit of maintaining tension with those countries? Rationally, what's the benefit? You may like or dislike their governments. Okay, I'm not a communist and I've never supported a Marxist government, but that's not my issue. This must be decided by the people there, not me, even if I don't like it. But the fact of the matter is that by maintaining tension with those countries, instead of helping them move away from that kind of government—if they are bad governments—instead of doing that, we just maintain tension. That raises the price of energy.

I mean, we see it—and this example here, what we have in Iran today, is just a blatant example of that. We could have a very affordable price of energy if we hadn't sanctioned Russia, if we hadn't sanctioned Iran or whoever else. What's the point? I mean, we had the Cold War for 50 years without sanctioning Russia for its oil. Even though we were in the Cold War, you understand, we had forces deployed in Germany, right at the border, monitoring it every day. We had those radars, U-2 flights, and SR-71s flying over the USSR, plus satellites. We monitored every single move you could have in Russia.

And we even had, you may remember, the KL-007 incident in the far east, near Sakhalin Island, where that Boeing was shot down by the Russian Air Force by mistake—but still shot down. In any case, we didn't apply sanctions on the Soviet Union at that time. We were rational, understanding, and patient, asking: what's the benefit of applying sanctions, and what problem does it actually solve? But we're no longer like that. We're totally irrational. We act like children in primary school. That's it—exactly—we just want to punish people, and we sanction and sanction and sanction, sanction over sanction, which are basically illegal in essence. But that's another topic.

So we're not improving the situation—we're just making it worse, increasing tensions, creating conditions where, in that case, the price of energy keeps rising and skyrocketing. For whose benefit? And now we see that the war on Iran just benefits Moscow because of the price of oil. So we're totally contradicting ourselves all the time, because we're not able to understand the problems or find reasonable solutions to them. And again, there's no reason to fight against Iran. Iran isn't a country that has even tried to expand itself.

Even Iraq—I mean, Iraq started a war with Iran with the support of the West, basically France and the US in particular. So Iraq tried to do that, not under pressure, but let's say the Western countries helped to create this crisis. But in any case, Iran was attacked; it was not the attacker. And I don't understand exactly what the real problem with Iran is in this region. I mean, I see no country today in the Middle East—except Israel, by the way—that could be a potential problem for regional security. Even Syria certainly has problems of its own, but I'm not sure it has a regional impact. So what's the benefit of intensifying those crises?

#Nima

I don't understand that.

#Jacques

But again, maybe I'm just too rational, and our leaders are irrational.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. That's the case—I think that's the case.

#Jacques

That's the problem.

#Nima

Yeah, that's the problem. Exactly. Thank you, Carl. As always, we learn from you, and we hope you can get rid of these sanctions. We know they're trying to put a lot of pressure on you as well, because it's not easy.

#Jacques

Well, we're back in the domain of irrationality, and that's it. Exactly.

#Nima

Thank you, Carl. It's a great pleasure.

#Jacques

Thank you for inviting me. Thank you very much.