

Matthew Hoh: The End of US Air Power Advantage

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Friday, April 10th, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Matthew Hoh, is here with us. Welcome back, Matt.

#Matthew

Hi, Nima. Good to see you.

#Nima

Matt, let me start with this—sort of, you know—the latest news in the Middle East is pretty amazing. Before, they were talking about a ceasefire in Lebanon, and it seems like they're getting close to that point. We had reports in Axios and Israel Hayom; both of them said there's going to be an immediate ceasefire tomorrow, that they're going to announce it. This is before the negotiations even happen. But looking at the situation, in your opinion, with what we've seen so far, are you optimistic? Do you see anything, you know, anything important coming out of these negotiations?

#Matthew

No, I'm not optimistic at all. And, you know, of course, thanks for having me here with you. I'm not at all optimistic about it—very skeptical. I mean, I think all of us have a warrant to be skeptical and not be called cynical. I mean, look at the two rounds of negotiations in the last 12 months that were cut off, and betrayal occurred—backstabbing—and then Iran was bombed. And then, too, just the way Israel has carried out its part in the ceasefires—put that word in quotes—in Gaza and in Lebanon. I mean, just daily, daily violations. Thousands of people killed and wounded during these ceasefires. So, you know, if they do get some type of deal tomorrow to include Lebanon and the broader ceasefire, I'm not optimistic at all.

And I wonder, with the Israelis, Nima, if with Israel it's just a question of them having gotten what they want. They've established the facts on the ground in Lebanon. They've bombed enough bridges over the Litani to now fully isolate southern Lebanon from the rest of the country, so they can claim it, right? So they can occupy it, so they can settle it. You know, have they, as the Israelis like to say, got the facts on the ground already so they can go forward with a ceasefire? That's even if they

intend to—if there's even going to be one, or if there's going to be any kind of good faith. And again, we've all seen what Israeli conduct during ceasefires is like. We've also seen what American conduct is like during negotiations. So yeah, no, I'm not optimistic. Oh, you're muted.

#Nima

Sorry about that. In the case of Israel, Matt, I think Donald Trump himself is reaching a point where there's a lot of economic pressure. You can see it in the way everyone's talking about how the market is working these days. There's a lot of internal pressure on Donald Trump. How do you see the outcome of these pressures on him, and the way he just green-lighted Benjamin Netanyahu right after the ceasefire to hit Lebanon again?

#Matthew

Yeah, I think with Donald Trump, Nima, it's really bad now. I think our understanding of him—particularly in his first term—as someone who agreed with the last person in the room with him, you know, I think that's now reached crisis levels. The reporting we're seeing about how he's swayed day by day by whoever he talks to has reached, you know, emergency levels. Not that it wasn't bad before, but now I think it's really, really bad. You just had CBS News reporting today that supposedly Donald Trump got a phone call from Netanyahu, and that's why Trump then said, "Nope, Lebanon's not part of the ceasefire deal." Before, he was for it—Netanyahu called him. I mean, it just seems like there's one thing after another happening like that.

Netanyahu plays that role quite a bit, but we also see that happening domestically. Certainly, the news here in the United States—inflation was at 3.3% last month, and the job report, you know, the job numbers are terrible, absolutely terrible. I mean, whatever indicator you're looking at, you're looking at a country that's in really, really poor economic health. The American public's confidence in the economy is the lowest it's ever been recorded. And this is based on reporting of American consumer confidence, American economic confidence, that goes back to World War II. I mean, now we're at the worst point in terms of how Americans view their economy. So all of this pressure—and the reality of what just occurred—hasn't caught up with us yet. You know, yes, gasoline prices in the United States have gone up. They've gone up.

Airline tickets have gone up—things like that have shown in the last month. But, you know, that wave of impact from the shutdown of the Straits, the destruction and damage to energy facilities throughout the Gulf, just that economic warfare, that pressure, really hasn't arrived here yet in the United States. So it's going to happen, and it's going to hurt. And it's already an economy that's doing poorly.

It's already an economy that's been teetering on recession, and this is likely the thing that pushes it over. And more than that, it's not just a normal recession—it's what's called stagflation, where you have both high inflation and very, uh, high interest rates, which are a sign of a poor economy and

the inability for things to get going, you know? So you have this idea being presented to the president that he's got to get out of this before it really has an impact, because as bad as the economic consequences of this war have been—and will be over the next several months—I think the world is largely going to escape the real dangers we were facing.

Now, if this war had continued the way it was headed—with attacks on Gulf infrastructure, Iranian infrastructure, energy infrastructure, and the straits remaining closed—that would have had a tremendous impact. We wouldn't have just been looking at the possibility of a global recession, but a global depression. So I think, with this war being curtailed at six weeks, there are still going to be a rough several months ahead. But I don't think the world economy is going to bottom out or blow out the way a lot of people feared. Still, in the United States—because of the conditions, and I'd say this probably applies to Europe as well, and to America's Pacific allies, the Japanese and the South Koreans—this alone could have the effect of, again, essentially a recession coupled with high inflation, so stagflation.

You know, I mean, I think that's what's being presented to the president. Now, whether that sticks in his head for longer than five minutes after the person who just briefed him leaves the room—so after Scott Pescent or Susie Wiles or whoever's trying to talk to him, maybe send them in, you know—and then he gets a phone call from Netanyahu, and he decides this is the right thing to do, to declare a ceasefire. And then, within hours, he does everything he can to jeopardize that. So I think what we're in for here is just this roller-coaster ride with this man who should be removed from office. Yeah, I'll just leave it at that.

#Nima

Yeah. But Pete Hegseth—I'm sure you read the New York Times article about who was agreeing with Donald Trump to go to war with Iran. He basically mentioned that Pete Hegseth was the only person who was saying, "Let's go, let's do it, it's a doable mission." Right. But the others—you know, nobody else, even Rubio, wasn't there.

#Matthew

Right. And, you know, Besant, the Treasury Secretary, wasn't there. I don't think Chris Wright, the Energy Secretary, was there. I take that article from The Times with a lot of caution, a lot of hesitation and doubt, because The Times is responsible for generating narratives—and for generating the Democratic, the liberal, the left-side-of-the-aisle narrative in this country. And, you know, as well, it's just a description of the times. I heard it once, and I think it's a fantastic description: the New York Times represents the left wing of Wall Street.

I think that it also is integrated. The New York Times is an establishment icon within the military-industrial complex. So, certainly, the idea of passing the blame off to the Israelis and saying Rubio and others were aghast in the American intelligence service—you know, John Ratcliffe, the

CIA director, went rushing over to correct what the Israelis had said. And General Cain said, you know, the Israelis always oversell and underdeliver—oversell and underdeliver intelligence. So I'm hesitant to believe The Times, just because we've seen them so often in the past protect the establishment narrative, protect the imperial narrative, protect the American empire.

And here, of course, they're blaming the Israelis, which is interesting because they've defended Israel for years and years. So I'm hesitant about that. But that point about Hegseth—I completely agree. That's the part of the article I have no hesitation about. You can see Hegseth being the cheerleader for war. And I think the reports we've read from members of Congress, talking about when they've been briefed by the Pentagon and Hegseth is there, and the anonymous sources coming out from people who know him—essentially, this is a guy who believed the fantasy.

He's a fabulist. He believes he's a modern-day Christian warrior, a crusader. These thoughts in his head about the prowess, the superiority, the ability of the American military to dominate—you can clearly see that line in his thinking, that line in his character and who he is. So absolutely, all the reports we're seeing that Hegseth believed this wouldn't be a problem, that the Iranians really wouldn't fight back—and if they did, we'd easily overwhelm them and defeat them—yeah, that makes sense. That absolutely makes sense.

I mean, I also want to—while I'm thinking about it—I do want to plug an article that shows how that line of thinking runs throughout the Pentagon. And we've talked about this before. I don't want to talk too much about Pete Hegseth; I want to talk about the institution that created Pete Hegseth, right? The system that birthed Pete Hegseth. Because we can criticize Hegseth all the time—he's a cartoon character—but the reality is he's a manifestation of the American military, of the Pentagon, of the American military-industrial complex.

Why would the American empire, after all we've seen—how it's acted over the decades, as it flails and as it fails—why wouldn't it produce a Secretary of Defense like Pete Hegseth? That's the kind of conversation we're having here. But I want to point people toward an article about Iraq written by Nir Rosen in Dropsite News. It's a very long article, and it's excellent. Joe Kent is heavily interviewed in it, and Kent's observations, along with Rosen's reporting in that piece—which just came out yesterday—are crucial to understanding how the American military thinks. In this case, it's talking specifically about Iraq and seeing all Shia as being part of a conspiracy.

That doesn't matter—whether they're civilian officials, security personnel, part of the Iraqi resistance, the Popular Mobilization Forces, or the Iraqi army. And I know those all overlap, and Nir Rosen does a great job explaining that for people who aren't familiar with it. But the most important thing coming out of that article is the clear articulation of just how wooden-headed they are. Our friend Larry Wilkerson—who I'm hopefully going to see this weekend—likes to use that phrase, “wooden head.” I think he gets it from Barbara Tuchman. But that's what it is: these men and women who populate the Pentagon, who have this view of the world that is just inaccurate.

To put it simply, they feel that by bombing all these hundreds of sites—bombing the Iraqi army, bombing Iraqi security forces, bombing Iraqi soldiers, and even Sunni militias that are on our side who fought the Islamic State—as well as bombing everything Shia, because they just believe all Shia are bad and that this is one vast Iranian conspiracy... you know, that wooden-headedness, that simple-mindedness, that stupidity is still there. And now, rather than the Americans viewing everything in Iraq that was Sunni as bad—which was my generation's war in Iraq, right, headed chiefly by Paul Wolfowitz—they've just flipped it around.

But now you have this generation that sees everything as an Iranian conspiracy. So please, after this call, do yourselves a favor—read that piece by Nir Rosen in Drop Site News—because it's absolutely spectacular in helping you understand what's happening in Iraq now, but also in giving you a larger perspective on the American military, the Pentagon, American leaders, and decision-making. It helps you understand not just what we're doing in Iraq, not just what we're doing in the Middle East, but also across the globe.

#Nima

Matt, what do you make of that last operation by Donald Trump in Iran before announcing the ceasefire? He said it was about rescuing a pilot. But then, you know, you look at the level of equipment that got fired on or destroyed in that region—it's amazing. Just 12 or 14 people, together with Little Birds, Black Hawks, C-130s, all of them together. What's your interpretation of what happened? Donald Trump tried so hard, together with Pete Hegseth, to share every detail of that operation. Right?

#Matthew

I think what you had was either the F-15 being shot down while conducting some incidental operation—not connected to anything regarding the Isfahan nuclear site—and that shoot-down happened at the same time as a potentially planned operation to steal something, the uranium out of that site. Right? I mean, or that F-15 was supporting operations. I know that's what Larry Johnson has said. I don't know, but that makes sense too. To me, you know, certainly—and I'm going to see a couple of guys this weekend who are former guys that did that type of work, were part of those types of mission sets.

You know, the idea to me is that maybe that air crewman, that weapons systems officer—WIZO, as they call them—maybe he was so far inland that they had to bring in helicopters to go look for him. You know, that's quite possible. There was a delay, it seemed, between the time he was shot down and the time that rescue mission may have happened. That makes sense, then, in terms of getting that team assembled and getting those Little Birds, as they're called, and the MH-6 helicopters into the C-130s.

Maybe they were already positioned for such a contingency, or maybe it just happened that the shoot-down occurred at the same time, in generally the same area, as the plan to steal the nuclear material—the enriched uranium. The more I think about it, the more I think that story about the enriched uranium doesn't make sense, just because it weighs so much. You know, we've heard it's roughly a thousand pounds, but when you add in the requirement to have it in specialized containers, as well as the system you need to transport those containers, you're talking about more than 15,000 pounds—definitely not something you could just hook up and have an MH-6 Little Bird fly away with.

I mean, maybe there was a follow-on force—someone else who was going to come in to help transport that. My understanding is you've got to have this enriched uranium in special containers, and they have to be a certain distance from one another. Otherwise, they can start a reaction, you know? So this is really complicated stuff and requires a lot more technical capacity than, you know, guys from Delta and SEALs backed by Army Rangers coming in on MH-6s. But maybe that was just the first part of the operation. We really don't know.

This whole thing has been obscure. We haven't seen the pilots yet. I've been traveling, so maybe they have said their names or at least shown pictures or something, but I don't think they have. It's a curious thing. I think what hopefully shocked some sense into the Americans was the reaction of the Iranians to this—every Iranian with a rifle heading out to find these pilots, shooting at the planes. I mean, our commentators here in the United States on corporate news were saying, "Oh, the Iranians are going to help find the pilot because they see him as liberating." Meanwhile, I don't know—every video we see coming out of Iran doesn't show that. And there's that incredible video of that one man being interviewed on an Iranian news program.

Looks like a morning breakfast program. He's got his daughter with him, and he's telling a story about how he was shooting at the helicopters. He thinks he hit one. His little girl wouldn't stay in the house. And when the presenter asked the little girl, "How come you didn't stay in the house? Why were you cheering on your dad to shoot at the Americans?" she said, "Because the Americans are child killers." And that's who we are in this war. That's who the United States is. The United States is child killers. Little girls will stand out and defy American aircraft in the open skies while their fathers shoot hunting rifles at those planes—because that's who we are. We're child killers, and we're invading their country.

#Nima

Matt, we had a report on CBS News about one of the survivors of the Iranian attack in Kuwait. He mentioned during the war—and what's amazing in this video I'm going to play for you—is that when the attacks were happening, instead of taking them and pushing them farther away from the Iranians, they were sending them closer to Iran. And here's what he said.

#Speaker 03

Interview with a member of the Army's 103rd Sustainment Command, based in Iowa. The soldier survived an Iranian drone strike that killed six others and says their unit was unprepared to defend itself. We agreed to conceal the soldier's face and voice. Here's CBS News correspondent Jonah Kaplan.

#Speaker 04

Photos and video obtained by CBS News show the charred aftermath of the deadliest Iranian attack on U.S. forces in five weeks of war.

#Speaker 05

Everything shook, like something out of a movie. Your ears are ringing, and there's dust and smoke everywhere.

#Speaker 04

This soldier was part of a crew of about sixty troops stationed at a military post in Kuwait that was hit by the strike. He says his unit's leadership ordered them there despite intelligence showing it was a potential drone target.

#Speaker 05

We moved closer to Iran, to a deeply unsafe area that was a known target. So, what reason were you given for why you needed to be there? I don't think there was ever a good reason articulated.

#Speaker 04

The attack killed six American soldiers and injured dozens more. Were those deaths preventable?

#Speaker 05

In my opinion, absolutely yes.

#Speaker 04

The next day, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth called the Iranian drone a "squirter" that got through the Army's air defenses. Yeah.

#Matthew

Yeah, I actually—Nima—I don't want to say too much about this because I'm nervous about people's identities being found out, but I did hear from someone who was there. And I heard this weeks ago—more or less the same thing that's being reported on CBS News. They were put in a building that was completely unprotected. They were in a location that didn't make sense to any of them. And yeah, they were killed—slaughtered. Their role in this, their responsibility, the criminality in it. And the same could be said—look, I'm here in Columbus, Ohio today, and when I was driving to this hotel, coming down Route 23—Route 23 is the highway that runs north-south through the middle of Columbus, Ohio.

Columbus is a pretty big city, you know—the capital of Ohio. The northbound lane was completely closed off, and I saw motorcycle cops blocking the on-ramps. I drove for a while, maybe about a mile, and then finally I saw the funeral procession coming. All the off-ramps were closed again. It was a big procession, for an Ohio Air National Guard member, Master Sergeant Tyler Simmons—a young man who was killed on the KC-135 that went down over Iraq. And, you know, the poignancy of that for me—here's this town, this city, this state burying one of their young men who went to war against Iran. For what purpose? For what reason? He wasn't even active duty; he was Ohio National Guard, or Air National Guard.

You know, I mean, just the loss that these communities are taking—the cost to the families of the men and women who were killed in that drone strike. You just played the clip. This never ends. Their lives are never put back together. Futures were crushed because the Pentagon put these young men and women into a facility that was unprotected from the most likely possible Iranian attack. And we saw that throughout the region. We saw these bases that had to be evacuated. We saw, just in the last couple of weeks, U.S. Central Command—which is the military command responsible for the Middle East—putting out tenders to contractors around the world saying, "Hey, can you deliver concrete bunkers to our bases in the Middle East?" I mean, that was weeks after this war started. And it wasn't like this the first time.

It wasn't the first time we'd been at war. Our bases in Iraq and Afghanistan were mortared and rocketed all the time—we had bunkers everywhere. We've just watched the Ukraine-Russia war for the last four years, where missiles and drones are fired by the hundreds every day, right? And then we also have the direct experience of engaging with Iran in 2024, and then again in 2025, when the Iranians fired hundreds and hundreds of missiles and drones. So the United States goes into this war willingly—a war of choice, a war of aggression—without even protecting its own troops. So not only do you have this war built upon lies, a war that is unjust, unprovoked, and counterproductive in every way, but they didn't even prepare for it.

And so now you've got this young man who's probably wracked with survivor's guilt, but has the courage—the guts—to go to the American media and say, "My friends were murdered because of the incompetence of the U.S. military that goes all the way to the highest levels." I've witnessed this funeral procession here, where this town is bleeding its heart out for another young man. What could he have done? What could he have contributed to his community? What could he have done

here in Ohio as part of the Ohio National Guard, rather than die in the skies over Iraq? Right? I mean, on so many levels, this is just revolting—so disgusting. And then, you know, I'm talking about here in the United States, but we can extrapolate that to everywhere else.

I mean, thirty-seven hundred Iranians have died, thousands more wounded. Seventeen hundred Lebanese have died, thousands more wounded, a million-plus Lebanese displaced. You've had hundreds killed and wounded throughout other states in the region. And of course, what's been happening to the Palestinians throughout all this? I mean, what an absolute waste. And then we look at the men who are leading this—you look at Donald Trump, Pete Hegseth, Netanyahu—and they are the worst among us. They are the absolute worst among us. These are men who are incompetent. They're con men. They can't even lie confidently. And we're allowing this to happen. The whole thing is just revolting and disgusting.

#Nima

Yeah. Matt, when you look at the way Donald Trump somehow changed— I don't know if the decision to send J.D. Vance came from Trump himself or if it was something the Iranians were asking for. Because from what I've heard so far, the Iranians didn't want to negotiate with Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. That's why J.D. Vance joined the team. And if that's the case, my question is: it seems like Donald Trump doesn't trust J.D. Vance. That's why he's sending Jared Kushner and Witkoff along with him. What's that about?

#Matthew

I think Trump totally trusts Witkoff and Kushner. The Iranians don't. So I think what has to happen is that Vance has to be there to cover for Witkoff and Kushner. You know, this is tongue-in-cheek, what I'm about to say, but it's what my friend Dan McAdams at the Ron Paul Institute tweeted the other day—that if the Iranians trust Witkoff and Kushner, then they deserve everything they're going to get. It's tongue-in-cheek, of course, but still, why are the Iranians even allowing Witkoff and Kushner to be part of this?

I mean, you had a series of exposés in the Western press clearly stating that everyone understands Witkoff and Kushner to be Israeli assets—that they don't understand this region, they don't understand this war, they don't understand what's involved here, except through an Israeli lens, through a Zionist lens. And to allow them to be involved in this, especially with all the double-dealing, the double-crossing... In fact, twice in two months, the Iranians were negotiating with us, led by Witkoff, and he betrayed them. The Iranians were attacked twice in twelve months, and they're still going to sit down with this guy? I don't know. I don't know if it's going to be direct—I assume it's probably indirect—but, you know, some Pakistani guy shuttling between rooms in a hotel someplace.

But I don't understand why the Iranians would even say that. Look, the Russians said Keith Kellogg can't be part of your negotiating team. And Keith Kellogg was not part of the negotiating team for the Trump administration, even though he was Trump's envoy to Ukraine. But the Russians said, "We don't trust this guy. This guy is not going to be acting in good faith. We don't even think he's going to represent the interests of the United States. We think he's going to represent the interests of the Ukrainians." And it's the same thing here. I'd say that a hundred times—I'll say it the rest of this episode if you want. You know, Witkoff and Kushner are not representing the interests of the United States; they're representing their own interests.

They're representing Donald Trump's personal interests, and they're representing the interests of Israel. Now, which comes out on top? I think their personal interests and Donald Trump's interests do. But it's not that far removed from the interests of Israel. So, I mean, this whole notion that they're even sitting down with these guys—I just don't get it. I just don't understand why the Iranians are doing that. But there's so much we don't know about why the Iranians even accepted this deal. We assume that they feel they've done enough economic harm, that they've made their point, that they've caused enough political stress not just throughout the Gulf but with, you know, Europe and with America's allies—or vassals—in the Pacific.

Maybe the Iranians said, you know, they put it down on paper, added it up, and said, "We've done enough. We can stop here now. We don't have to prove this point any further." Maybe. But maybe there's another side. Maybe they do need to rest. Maybe they do need to refit. Maybe their missile and drone stocks are lower than many of us think they are, and they need to find a way out of this war because they can't sustain it militarily. Maybe that's part of it. Maybe it's a combination of all of it. That's probably what's likely. But certainly, we'll see.

But getting back to the question you first asked when we started here—you know, I'm not optimistic about this at all. I'm not optimistic about this at all. And if you have the Israelis saying, "OK, now we'll go along with it," well, that means either the Israelis have a plan to sabotage it, betray, and double-cross, or it means that the Israelis have pretty much gotten what they wanted. Like, say, in Lebanon: we've blown up all the bridges over the Litani, we've isolated southern Lebanon, it's ours for the taking now. No one can stop us from settling it or occupying it. So yeah, have your little ceasefire—we don't care about that.

#Nima

Matt, we've learned that the Spanish government is going to reopen its embassy in Tehran. This is something new, and together with what's happened in the Strait of Hormuz—Japan talking with the Iranians, trying somehow to negotiate with them—we also have the South Korean envoy going to Iran, talking with the Iranians. These are allies of the United States: Japan and South Korea. You can see that Europe views things differently. Their point of view is totally different from what Donald Trump and the individualists are talking about. We've been talking about the U.S. empire—what's

happening to that empire when even the Europeans can't understand the language of Washington, or of Japan or South Korea?

#Matthew

I think the clarity of what we're witnessing here is becoming too hard to resist—too hard to ignore. The American empire represents the 20th century; that was the American century, and it's ending. It didn't happen right at the turn of the century, but this is where it's really, clearly ending. It's been in decline for a while, this entire century. Yeah, I get that. But this is the event that makes it clear—you can't ignore it. And for those nations, like the Europeans, and even those within America's Pacific partners or its vassals in the Pacific, that obvious reality is something they have to accept.

And I think for some in Japan and South Korea, this event—with the energy shock they've already felt so hard, the catastrophe that was just about to overwhelm them, and may still overwhelm them energy-wise—well, the reality is, look at who's in charge in the U.S. They still haven't let up on their anti-China stuff, and they expect us to go to war with them. What happened to Kuwait, to Qatar, to Saudi Arabia, to the Emiratis—the Emiratis, of course, seem overjoyed about it—but that's the reality that's going to befall the Japanese, the South Koreans, and the Australians: you go to war with China, and the American empire's buffer is your country.

And if you think the Americans are somehow going to protect you, how is that going to happen? Where is that going to come from? It's just going to be different next time. I mean, I haven't seen any Australians—besides people who already agree with us—saying this, but I've kind of felt that from some Koreans and some Japanese: that, okay, we need to really think about this. Are we really going to go forward with this American empire that's a vestige of the 20th century? Or are we going to move into the 21st century? Are we just going to think it'll somehow be different when we go to war with China?

We saw the Americans fail to defeat the Houthis in the Red Sea twice. They failed not just to defeat the Iranians, but essentially helped establish Iran as a world power. Right? I mean, Iran is a world power. What it has accomplished in the last six weeks proves that—it is a world power. The fact that it's been able to have these effects throughout the world, that it's changing the economic reality of countries—not just immediately, not just in the moment, not just with higher prices at their gas pumps—but forcing them to recalculate and recalibrate how they're going to move forward into the 21st-century world.

It has demolished the idea that the United States is the guarantor of the Middle East, that it's the guarantor of energy supplies and energy transit. And the fact that the United States has these bases on your land to protect you—that's all been demolished. I mean, you're essentially seeing the Iranians, through their actions in the last six weeks, just destroy these shibboleths, just pull them down. Right? These myths are being pulled down and exposing the reality of what the American empire is. And so I think you have a number of states that are willing—they have the guts to lean

into this. I think Spain, of course, is one of them. The Japanese, maybe another. I mean, Japan certainly has a very conservative leadership right now. But then you have other Europeans.

We talk about this a lot—people who see their survival, who understand that their whole position is predicated on the status quo, and that their success now and in the future depends on preserving the past. And this is why the Europeans are so bound up with NATO. I don't know if you heard Nima Alkhorshid's comments yesterday about this war—oh my god, it's just... I don't even listen to it anymore, it's so nauseating. It's so sycophantic, it's absurd. He's berating European nations that either didn't do enough to support the Americans or came late to support them, talking about the necessity of what the United States is doing to ensure that the Iranians don't have a nuclear weapon, and that the Iranians must stop their terrorism across the planet.

I mean, it just sounded like Mark Ruda was auditioning to be the chief docent at the future Donald Trump Presidential Library or something like that. But it really was. You have those within Europe who view their survival—the keeping of their good thing—as dependent upon maintaining the structures that put them in that place last century. And again, you and I talk about it: that's NATO. That's why you see this commitment by the Scholzes, the Macrons, the Merckels—the way they're just, you know... But the other thing is, you look at—here's, I think, a good example, a good description, like a visual of the decline of the American empire. George H. W. Bush goes to war against Iraq in 1990–1991. He has a coalition of dozens of countries, hundreds of thousands of troops from around the planet.

I mean, a UN Security Council resolution backing him, right? I mean... Then you have George W. Bush go to war against Iraq, and it's much diminished. You have major European allies saying, "We're not going to take part in this," such as the French and the Germans. But they still—well, they don't get the Security Council resolution, but they still have, in 2003, the backing of the Brits. The Brits sent 45,000 troops to invade Iraq in 2003. The Spanish and the Italians, who we're talking about a lot right now in terms of defying the Americans, are saying, "We're not taking part. You can't use our airspace or our bases." The Spanish and the Italians had thousands of troops in Iraq during that occupation, right?

And now you see this war against Iran where no one is taking part in the major hostilities aside from the Americans and the Israelis. You do have the French and the British, their aircraft shooting down drones and such. But even the Arab Gulf states—well, they've launched some attacks into Iran, but not much, not much. You know, they'd just as soon, with the exception of the Emiratis, see this thing be over with and done. They don't want anything like it ever to happen again. So I think, looking at the support the U.S. got in the first Iraq war in 1991, the second Iraq war in 2003, and then comparing it to this war against Iran, you really see the abandonment.

I don't want to say "abandonment," because that's overstating it, but it's the weakening of the American empire in terms of marshalling its officials to do what it needs them to do. And now we have this conversation we're having right now about what this looks like going forward, and nations

needing to make critical choices. We've been talking about this for a while, you and I—about countries having to decide, what do we do going forward? Do we stick with the American empire, or do we do something different? And now this war is one of those great catalysts. Right? Well, this is like throwing the toaster oven into the bathtub, you know—something to really get things moving forward. And so here we are.

#Nima

Matt, we have the reality of the war in Ukraine right now, the reality of what's going on in the Middle East. On the other hand, we have the opposition leader in Taiwan going to China, meeting with Xi Jinping, which I think is so important right now with everything that's happening. Do you think the people—the decision makers in Washington—will recognize the reality of what's going on and decide something more important for the future, in terms of being more strategic in how they behave? Are they going to get to that point?

#Matthew

I would hope they do. I mean, here you have this situation where the Taiwanese, for maybe decades, have thought, "The United States will fight with us. They will fight for us." And that the Chinese—Beijing—will never attack us because they'd have to fight the Americans. That's our deterrent. And now you're watching this, and you see that the Americans can't even get their ships within a thousand kilometers of the Iranian coastline. Taiwan is a hundred kilometers—or a hundred miles, whatever it is—from the Chinese coastline. And these are the people who are going to protect us? This is ridiculous. The Americans had to abandon all their bases throughout the Middle East. They're going to have to abandon Okinawa. They may even have to abandon Guam against the Chinese. They're going to fall back to Australia, essentially—back to Australia and Pearl Harbor, to Hawaii.

That's where the Americans will have to fall back. I don't think they'll be able to hold Guam. So these are the people who are going to come and keep us from being overtaken by Beijing? Maybe we should start thinking about that. And I think that questioning—just as we were talking about with the Japanese, the Spanish, whoever—is something the Taiwanese are now having to deal with. They've been banking on the idea that the United States had their back, and that in the big fight to come, when Beijing tries to take them, the Americans are going to beat them back. Who believes that? We couldn't beat the Houthis, and now we can't even get our ships within a thousand kilometers of the Iranian coastline. But somehow we're going to defend Taiwan from China?

Really? You know, I think there's that type of conversation happening. And if it's not happening, then they deserve everything they get. If countries are going to go along with this as if it didn't happen, as if these weren't real consequences, as if this wasn't a depiction of what will occur in the

future, then you deserve everything you get. Then you can hang out with Mark Ruda, you know, and vie for Donald Trump's attention as your country is put in a position where it's either irrevocably hurt by a war in the future or just continues to be a vassal without any benefit to the United States.

#Nima

John Kerry, the former Secretary of State, was asked yesterday whether Netanyahu had ever asked him or his administration to attack Iran. He said it wasn't just his administration—the Obama administration—but that Netanyahu had asked Biden, Trump, even George W. Bush. He said Netanyahu asked every U.S. president to attack Iran, but he finally got it from Donald Trump. So the question is, what's the point? What's the fragility of Donald Trump? Where does it come from? And here's what was reported about Epstein and the Epstein case.

#Speaker 06

Going for the Trump administration right now, Antonia, things are going so well that a war—which has pushed the Epstein investigation to the back page for the last five weeks—is going so badly that the First Lady of the United States makes an unscheduled, impromptu statement about the Epstein investigation. The administration was so desperate to get it out of the headlines, and now it's back in the headlines during an international armed conflict, where just 48 hours ago the President of the United States—her husband—was threatening the destruction of an entire civilization.

So we're just 48 hours removed from threatening war crimes, then trying to distract from those threats with a colossal disaster of our own making in the Middle East. And now we're burying a statement by the First Lady about an investigation that the Department of Justice has so badly mishandled that Pam Bondi—who a week ago was the Attorney General of the United States, and who a week from now should be testifying before the House Oversight Committee—will not be testifying. And the argument the administration is making is, well, she's no longer the Attorney General.

#Nima

Yeah, she's no longer.

#Matthew

Yeah, she's subpoenaed by name, though, from what I understand, so she needs to appear anyway. But yeah, I mean, what could the administration have done so poorly, so badly, so inevitably, to make them think that maybe releasing three million Epstein files that hadn't been released would be a way to get out of the current catastrophe they're in? Right? I mean, yeah, this is just incredible—it's absolutely incredible. I mean, gosh, with this war, have we ever seen a war this short? I mean, I'm sure we have, but still—if it does end, and that's a big if—but say a ceasefire does hold.

And, you know, Iran gets out of it what it should get out of it, because it does have the upper hand right now. It continues to hold the initiative. It continues to be in a position where the United States cannot achieve its objectives—regime change, democracy, destroying the nuclear program, destroying the missile and drone programs. The United States cannot do those things. Those are America's objectives; they can't achieve them. However, the Iranian objectives—maybe they didn't have it all planned out, but they've certainly taken advantage of it—and chief among them is reordering the Middle East.

The fact that the Gulf states are now going to pay a tax to Iran to ship their oil, their natural gas, and all those byproducts they produce out of the Strait of Hormuz—oh my God, really? Wow. That is incredible, that this is what's happening. I mean, has there been anything like this that we can think of? I mean, how badly they bungled this. Now, the Israelis—I think what's important about the ceasefire is realizing that American objectives are not the same as Israeli objectives. It may be that this hurt that was put on the Iranians—the destruction, the damage—means the Gulf states may now be more inclined to hew to Israel, right?

So this whole thing may actually induce Saudi Arabia to join the Abraham Accords—just as speculation, right? You know, Israel is like, "Well, that's pretty good. We got something out of this war then. Right, we killed the Ayatollah, we can check that off. And now his son's in hiding." And, you know, Israelis like that type of violence for violence's sake. The Gulf states may now be more inclined to be supportive of Israel, or have better relations with Israel, because of the issues—the apathy, the hostility with Iran, to put it mildly. But also, the Israelis had their opportunity to take southern Lebanon. They got to start that war again. And they got it right.

I mean, so the Israelis may look at this and say, you know what, in terms of our list of what we want to accomplish here, we got a bunch of things. And same with the Iranians—the Iranians may look at their list and say, you know what, we did good enough. This is good enough for us. The Americans—what can the Americans say is on their list? And now it's so bad for the U.S. that, yeah, you've got people on corporate American television talking about Epstein again, as a way to cover up—let alone that whole spectacle with Melania Trump—but as a way to try and distract people from this war that the United States, at this point, has so clearly lost.

#Nima

Yeah, I think right now the fear is that the Board of Peace announced today that the deadline for the disarmament of Hamas is coming, and it's today—and Israel wants to get back. What is that? It's unbelievable, you know, getting back out from Lebanon, or maybe announcing some sort of fake ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, like before, and then attacking Gaza again.

#Matthew

I know. It doesn't make any sense, right? It makes no sense. I mean, you just had Zamir, the chief of staff of the IDF, a week or two ago say the IDF is close to breaking. I think the recommendation they have is to extend the time that Israeli reservists stay mobilized, which is going to be really hard on the Israeli population and on the economy—to keep those men and women in uniform longer. They've essentially been having these mobilizations for three years, which have really hurt society as well as the economy. They can't continue to sustain it.

I mean, economically, the Israelis just always—well, the correct assumption is the Americans will bail us out. I mean, that's not an issue; the Americans will. So if they need that kind of economic lifeline, like the United States has done in Afghanistan or Ukraine, they can do that as well. But yeah, I mean, you have this reality that the Lebanon operation, plus the expanding annexation operations throughout the West Bank—a large part of that has to do with the settlers there, right, with the Jewish terrorists in the West Bank. But now, yeah, this idea that, okay, six months have gone by since the Gaza ceasefire, and we have to do this Hamas disarmament thing. Who's going to do that?

And nobody is lining up to be part of this international stabilization force. I'm not sure where the Indonesians are on that anymore, particularly after Israel killed three of their peacekeepers in Lebanon. So is Israel going to send two of their divisions back into Gaza? Is that what they plan on doing? I mean, they can't do it all. And so this is another argument, I guess, for Israeli acceptance of a ceasefire—to back them out of the conflict with Iran. Hopefully that would then take the heat off them in Lebanon, particularly if they've already gotten what they wanted out of southern Lebanon and can occupy it the way they want to, and if they can get Hezbollah to stop the attacks.

Okay, now you can see how they can reorient a bit and keep doing what they're doing in the West Bank, which is still going to need it. When the annexation in the West Bank gets to the point we expect—maybe in two or three years—you're going to have something there that makes the first and second intifadas look like, you know, kindergarten recess. I mean, it's going to be because the Palestinians will understand that they're fighting for their lives, that they're being shepherded into these ghettos in the cities. And that's it—that's going to be the end of them. They're going to become Gaza. So how does Israel really prepare for that?

In the meantime, they can't resolve anything that's happening in Gaza. I mean, I think if the Israelis were smart, they would just shrug their shoulders about Hamas right now. Look, you've got 60% of Gaza, and you've got 2 million people living in less than 40% of it. They're immiserated, they're starving. Your soldiers are allowed to shoot nine-year-old Palestinian girls in the head and get away with it. Nobody cares. So just let Gaza marinate in its misery there, locked in that 40% of what once was the strip. Just lock them in there. I mean, that's what I think the Israelis should do if I were some kind of evil consultant advising them. And then focus on Lebanon, get that secure, and move on to your annexation of the West Bank.

And then you have your greater Israel. You know, keep Sharaa in control, keep relations as good as possible, don't mess around in southern Syria, but tell your people to shut up about a future war with Turkey, because the Turks are the ones who control Sharaa, who control the al-Qaeda boss in Damascus. You don't want that stirred up again. I mean, the Israelis—it's never enough for them. It's never enough for them. And that's the way it's always going to be. And that's going to be, ultimately—not anytime soon—but I think that will be Israel's downfall, that it was never enough. They're going to descend into civil war, fighting each other, and they're going to collapse along their fronts. I'm talking years from now, but I think that's what you're going to see with Israel.

#Nima

Thank you so much, Matthew, for being with us today. Have a nice trip.

#Matthew

All right. Thank you, Nima. I appreciate it. And Nima, as always, he's too modest and too nice to tell people to subscribe and like his channel. So subscribe, like, and share Nima's channel, and get him more followers because he deserves it. Nima, you need to be up to, like, a million followers by next year or something like that.

#Nima

Yeah, thank you. Thank you so much, Matthew.

#Matthew

You're welcome. Thank you.

#Nima

Thank you.