

Prof. Ted Postol: The US Lost Quietly. Iran Just Proved It.

The interview examines rising Middle East tensions amid a proposed ceasefire, highlighting deep disagreements between political and military strategies. It argues that long-term regional instability stems from past foreign interventions and failed diplomatic decisions, including the collapse of nuclear agreements. The discussion portrays current leadership decisions as escalating conflict rather than resolving it, warning that continued warfare risks wider regional and global consequences. Militarily, it claims shifting technology—especially drones, missiles, and satellite intelligence—is changing the balance, making traditional defenses less effective. The conversation concludes that public opinion, particularly in the U.S., is shifting against the war, potentially forcing major political and strategic changes toward de-escalation.

#Nima

War in the Middle East — we had the announcement from Donald Trump, the president of the United States, that there are going to be some sort of talks, a two-week ceasefire to negotiate, to try to do something about ending the conflict. It doesn't seem that Israel is happy with that. But what is it, Ted, when it comes to Israel? Because we had the attack on Lebanon — they don't like it, it doesn't seem Netanyahu likes it. And what's happening right now isn't something new. Here's what John Kerry, former Secretary of State, said about Benjamin Netanyahu.

#Guest

He sat across the table from Prime Minister Netanyahu more than almost anyone else out there. He and Israel are, of course, big factors here. There's been recent reporting — you probably saw it in The New York Times — that Netanyahu was in a situation where he basically pitched Trump on attacking Iran. Were you ever part of any conversations like that? I know he's made those pitches to past administrations. Were you ever part of that? And were you surprised that he was able to convince Trump to do this?

#Speaker 03

Well, I was part of any number of conversations with Prime Minister Netanyahu. But as for him pitching the U.S. to strike Iran — yes. Yes, he wanted us to strike. He came to President Obama and made a presentation asking to strike. President Obama refused. President Biden refused. President Bush refused. The only president who has agreed to this, obviously, is President Trump.

#Nima

Ted, what's your understanding of what's going on right now?

#Ted

I'm probably not the best person to ask in terms of the political subtleties, but I do have a view. It appears, by every measure and action Netanyahu has taken—not only recently but over the years—that his objective, what he would like to do, is to destroy Iran as a functioning state. He would like to turn it into a failed state, a collection of fragments fighting among themselves, much like what he accomplished with the help of the United States—the incompetent help of the United States—in Syria. I mean, what he wants to do is create a political vacuum in Southwest Asia with regard to states that could potentially oppose Israeli military and expansionist objectives.

So once these states are no longer functioning—once they're failed states—then it's much easier to go about your business, because it's the old divide-and-conquer kind of mindset. And that is pretty clearly what he's up to, what he's been up to for a long time, what he's wanted to do for a long time. Now, besides the issues of morality—which, of course, should be important, although in his case there are no detectable moral concerns of any kind that we can see in this man—there's also the question of practicality. I mean, do you really want a failed Syrian state, for example, where we now have basically Al-Qaeda in charge?

I mean, it's laughable—well, it's not laughable, unfortunately. It's serious. The United States is trying to pretend that the current situation in Syria is better than when al-Assad was in charge. That doesn't mean one thinks Assad is a good choice if you could make the optimal choice. But when you look at the world you're given, you try to do your best, and you try at least not to do more damage than has already been done. Basically, you stay out of it if you can't do anything. And of course, if you look at the history of American and British involvement in Iran, it's the same situation.

The situation in Iran is totally, totally a product of American and British interventions. Uh, in 1953—I mean, you know this better than I do, you're a refugee from there—but, uh, you had a democracy. Mossadegh was elected fair and square, like any leader. And I wonder if there's any leader who just wants to do what's right for his country, not for other countries that are looking to take an opportunity and take the resources that Iran has, to steal them for themselves. Mossadegh wanted to nationalize the oil industry. He wanted to make sure that the Iranian people got a fair share of the wealth produced by the oil and the natural resources in Iran.

And what happened was that the Americans and the British basically ran a campaign against them. They falsely accused them of being communists—you know, the usual, what I should say, the normal operational procedures. And they destroyed them, overthrew the government, and put in a dictator, the Shah, who was very brutal. They gave him lots of things they probably shouldn't have, including a lot of support for a nuclear energy program, a nuclear power program, which wasn't really needed given the enormous fossil fuel resources Iran had—and still has. But they created a

program that Iranians are rightfully very proud of, proud of their contributions to. I mean, it's now a cultural thing.

I mean, I was working with a colleague of mine in my research group, a wonderful man, Sir John Thompson, who was a British permanent representative to the UN—an honorable man, unlike many of his colleagues. When we talked about the Iranians, he knew a lot about Iran; he'd been involved in the Middle East. And he said, "Look, Iranians now have a great cultural pride in this nuclear energy program they have. You can't expect them to give it up." That was his view. He had all kinds of very intelligent, really innovative ideas on how to help Iran develop this technology further, while at the same time creating strong incentives for Iran not to build nuclear weapons with it. I won't go into that, but he was just... nobody would listen to him.

But it was just really amazing, because it would have been good for Iran and it would have been good for the Western countries—these ideas he had. And then, of course, there was this tremendously negative development, with the extremist Islamic elements taking control of the Iranian government. Iran is really quite a modern state—you know better than I do about this—and it has a long historical culture where education and professional standards have been very high. And, of course, the country was really not well suited for this quite repressive Islamic government. But that's what we got. That was American behavior; that was the result of the American and British interventions. Then we got this agreement on the enrichment of uranium that the Iranians agreed to, and it was a very good agreement in terms of constraining Iran from building a nuclear weapon.

#Nima

You mean the JCPOA, the one that was signed by John Kerry?

#Ted

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the JCPOA, was absolutely airtight in providing Iran with relief from sanctions, which Iran needed. And for a short time, Iran got the benefit of that, until we snapped back in a totally improper and unfair way. The rest of the world gained confidence that Iran was working with nuclear technology in a way that would not result in nuclear weapons. So it was a perfect agreement. But then the Americans—in this case, Donald Trump—just decided the agreement was no good. I mean, the interesting thing about Trump is he has these... well, it's not a surprise. "Oh, it's a terrible agreement." Well, explain it. Explain why it's a terrible agreement. I know quite a bit about the JCPOA.

#Nima

I believe he was just repeating what Netanyahu told him. He didn't really know anything about it.

#Ted

Well, see, the problem is—just to get us back to the original question you asked about Netanyahu—Netanyahu is irrational. I think, perhaps, I don't know if he's mentally unstable or not, if you'd call him that. I mean, with Trump, it's much clearer that he's mentally debilitated, but with Netanyahu, there's something really wrong. The man is completely without any moral guide of any kind. He's just—he's a psychopath. I mean, he is a psychopath. He doesn't manifest it in exactly the same ways that Trump does, but in terms of his moral commitment to anybody, including the Israeli people, this man has destroyed Israel.

I mean, it's destroyed Israel because people like me, who were not hostile to Israel—in fact, I still have many friends there who are suffering greatly under Netanyahu's leadership and who disagree with him—he's turned Israel into an international pariah. And I don't want anything to do with the Israeli government. I'll never go back to Israel again. I just don't want anything to do with them. He's played a major role in turning Israel into a functioning fascist state. It is a fascist state. I mean, when you see the attitudes of a large fraction—not everyone, but you don't need everyone—a large fraction of the Israeli population, they've basically become functioning fascists. And their attitudes are criminal.

You know, you have these interviews. I mean, I just saw one yesterday. I had to show it to my wife because I was so upset by it. This woman was asked—there was no trick involved, the journalist was just talking to her. It was clear they weren't trying to trap her or disguise who they were; they were American journalists. And they asked this woman about killing children in Gaza, and her response was, "Well, they grow up to be Arabs." I mean, I just couldn't... And there were a whole bunch of other interviews like that in this particular video, which seemed to show this is a very common attitude. It's not the attitude among my friends, I should say.

I would not engage with people who have that attitude, but it's very common, and it's this kind of mindset that has led to the slaughter in Gaza and the carpet bombing of southern Lebanon now. I mean, this is all due to—well, I shouldn't say it's all due to Netanyahu—it's due to Netanyahu's political skills, which are substantial, although he's evil. And "evil" is the right term, even if it's a bit oversimplified. But you have this evil man who's incredibly skilled politically. Incidentally, so was Adolf Hitler. You know, I'm in Germany here, and I have many friends, and of course World War II comes up in discussions. It's hard not to, in a place like Germany.

Just last night I was having a conversation with some friends, and I said, "Well, you know, Hitler was a very talented man." They kind of reacted, and I said, "Well, you have to admit, he was evil, but you can't ignore that these people can have skills. Because if they were just evil and didn't have skills, they wouldn't be so dangerous." But this Netanyahu—he only seems to care about himself, although maybe he has some distorted belief in turning Israel into this "greater Israel," whatever that means. But he's destroyed Israel, not only by undermining the basic fabric of society in a profound way. You can't get soldiers who are snipers to shoot children unless they think it's right.

When you see that kind of thing, that's beyond a simple war crime. It has to do with some sickness in the society that has somehow become acceptable. And the officers who oversee the snipers are equally sick—in fact, they're worse. These kinds of phenomena are clear indications that the society has descended into some kind of fascist state, a very dangerous, murderous, and racist form of fascism. I guess that's part of fascism. But Netanyahu is not alone. He's part of this group of people—some of whom I wouldn't say I grew up with, but whose attitudes I saw as a young child when I was in an immigrant Jewish community, where people would talk about racism, Jews being the chosen people, and somehow being superior.

Even as a very young person—11 or 12—I just found it objectionable. I don't know why, because a lot of people around me had no problem with it. But I just found it objectionable, and that feeling carried into my adulthood. I've always been very critical of this dangerous strain, this thread in religious Jewish culture. Now, that's not to say that all people have these ideas, but if you foster it and encourage it, and it takes over—as it has in Israel now—you get a state that's functionally a fascist state. And that's what we're seeing. It's not just Netanyahu; he's been the orchestrator, but there was a lot there to begin with. It's just like in Nazi Germany.

There was a lot there to create the monster that Hitler became in Nazi Germany. It wasn't just Hitler—he was very skilled. He was able to manipulate society and the culture, given the circumstances. And now you have a similar situation in Israel, and it's just horrifying, at least for me. Now, the other problem Israel has—and I hope there are Israelis listening to what I'm about to say—is that a very large percentage of Americans, including American Jews, now see Israel as a fascist state. And they do not like that. Israel is getting tens of billions of dollars in support from the United States to continue this monstrous murder of people all around them.

And, uh, there are a lot of people, myself included, who are strong advocates for ending all aid from the United States to Israel. Now, if that happens—I don't think it will happen easily, because of the Israeli lobby, this ultra-wealthy group of American Jews who are, and I'm going to say this—I wouldn't normally—who are more loyal to Israel than they are to the United States, of which they are citizens. If they feel so loyal to Israel relative to the United States—and this is something I would never normally say—then I think they should renounce their American citizenship and go to Israel.

Because this is unacceptable. I'm an American first. I'm a citizen of the world, and I have responsibilities as a citizen of the world and as an American citizen. And my country is not—if I have anything to do with it, and I'll try everything I can—my country will not become dominated by Israeli interests, monstrous, fascist, and murderous interests, doing the dirty work of a bunch of people who should all be nullified and either in prison or somewhere they can't do any harm to anybody else. It's just unacceptable to me as an American. And I'm an American first. That's the way I feel.

So, Israelis who think they're going to get a lot of help after this war is over—in the form of basically unlimited amounts of money—because it's essentially unconstrained American gifts to Israel, are

mistaken. We sell them arms, but then we have all these special programs that pay for the arms. So all these Israeli weapons—they're not paying for them; they're being gifted to Israel. My position, as an American citizen, is that if I could advocate a policy—a new policy in a new government, which I hope we'll be seeing, because I think Trump is going to be thrown out, although it's not clear exactly when or how—I would advocate that all aid to Israel be stopped. I think Israel has gone over the edge, and they should no longer be supported to carry out this murderous stuff they're doing with the help of the United States.

I would immediately stop all arms shipments to Israel if I could. It won't happen right now, but that's what I would do. If they have no bombs, they can't keep killing people in Gaza the way they've been doing. They can't keep carpet-bombing Lebanon. I'm not for the destruction of Israel, but it has to be reformed, and it has to become a non-apartheid state if it's going to survive—if it's going to get my support as an American. And I want to be clear: I'm speaking as an American now. Forget the fact that I come from a Jewish background. Forget it. It's irrelevant. I'm speaking as an American, and this is unacceptable to me as an American. And I think there are a lot of other Americans who feel this way. It's no longer a minority view.

And so, those Israelis who think there's no negative side to this beyond what's already happening—which is, of course, negative enough—need to think about what the future looks like. Without the tens of billions of dollars of support for this country, it's not going to continue to survive and prosper the way it has. I think some big changes are going to happen in the years ahead. It's not going to happen instantly, but the reaction among American citizens right now is swinging very strongly against what's happening in Southwest Asia—very strongly. Some of these polls show that 70% of Americans are against this war. They're not all overtly against it, or they're unsure, you know—but to have no more than 25 or 30% of your citizens supporting the war, when 15% of them, of course, are these extremist people, that's telling.

#Ted

Christian sects who think that when the end of the world occurs, it'll be happening in Israel—you know, that it'll all happen with the end of the world coming in Israel—I mean, you're down to a very small percentage of people among thinking Americans. When you look at the attitudes of the great majority of Americans, my greatest concern right now is that as the pendulum swings—and it will swing, it is swinging—people do things in a sensible way, that it doesn't swing too far in the wrong direction. "Swing too far" is maybe too simple a way to put it, but that's what I mean.

It's too one-dimensional, but that people don't do things that are counterproductive to bringing peace and stability to Southwest Asia. I think the American public is moving in that direction, and we're going to see some big changes. The question is, is the American political establishment up to implementing those changes? I'm basically thinking of the young Democrats, because the older

Democratic establishment needs to be swept aside. And the Republicans—those who are decent, honest people who have been offended and recoiled from what Trump and the Republican Party have become—there are a lot of Republicans who are very decent.

They're conservative politically, and that's fine. I have no problem with that. These people have to retake control of their party as well. And there has to be a cooperative move toward bringing the United States into a more stable configuration, where it's not posing such a threat to the entire world—because the United States is posing this threat. When we blindly provide Israel with the means to do what it's doing, we are part of the problem. There's no question about it. So anyway, that's my reaction to the question of Netanyahu. He has to be stopped. He has to be thrown out of office. The Israelis are the ones who have to do it.

I don't know if it's possible. I don't know the terrain of the politics. Israel is in big trouble. They have this extremist religious component in the country. It's been a problem for a long time, and now it's become such a problem that it's taken over, and the forces needed to retake control of the country are largely suppressed at this point. I don't know if things can swing in the other direction. I just don't understand the political landscape in Israel well enough. But if it doesn't happen in Israel, it has to happen from outside. And the United States is the outside player that can and should do this. As an American, I'm going to do everything in my power to see that happen.

#Nima

Yeah. Ted, when it comes to the war militarily—looking at what's happened so far—you see this sort of willingness on Netanyahu's part to continue the war. What's going on militarily in his mind? Because so far we've seen the latest photos and footage coming out; they're using interceptors that were produced in 2026, this year. So what is he planning for? What's happening in terms of the military operation, and the strategic military operation, against Hezbollah?

#Ted

If he understands the military situation—and I don't know how he wouldn't—I know Israelis who do understand it. You know, when I was involved in exposing the Patriot fraud during the war of 1991, I met an enormous number of first-rate Israeli military people. Afterwards, I didn't quite understand why the Israelis were so interested in me, because it was more of an American issue from my point of view. But I met an enormous number of very capable and really rather fine people. And I know these people understand the military situation when they see it. They have to understand that the military situation for Israel is desperate.

Uh, Hezbollah has reconstituted itself in Lebanon, and they're using a tremendous amount of drone technology. They've adapted that technology for their combat purposes. They've destroyed a lot of Merkava tanks—you know, that's a fantastic tank. I mean, the Merkava is a really impressive piece of technology. And they're being destroyed all over the place. You can't do what the Israelis have

been doing in the past and lose all these tanks. And you can't have the Israeli Defense Forces taking casualties. Israel is like the United States—the United States is very sensitive to casualties.

In a place like Lebanon, where you have an organization like Hezbollah, I won't say it's that they care less about human life—I'm not suggesting that at all—but they're in a struggle for what they see as their survival. And they're right. I mean, this is a struggle for survival. When you're in a struggle for survival, you're willing to take enormously more casualties than you would otherwise be willing to take. And we see that. They also, of course, come from an Islamic culture where, um, martyrdom has a special place in the culture. I don't know if that's overemphasized. It turns out, by accident, I have many friends who are Islamic, but I don't claim to understand the culture that well, because these friends are a preselected group by accident.

But if you talk about Christian culture or Jewish culture, being a martyr is also appropriate in certain circumstances. You know, when the Israelis talk about fighting to the last person for their survival, they mean it—but they're not fighting to the last person for their survival at that moment. They're going out and murdering people who are largely innocent, who really just want to be left alone. And there are a lot of Israelis who are not willing to lose their lives over it. If I were in Israel, I'd be doing everything I could to avoid being out in combat.

You know, I'd be willing to fight and die for my country, but I'm not willing to fight and die to murder people who have nothing to do with it, who pose no threat to my country. And they're having a lot of problems. They call people up, and a lot of them don't show. That was unthinkable in Israel—the Israel I know from decades ago. You would never not show up if you were called. You'd be there, but you'd never shoot a child. That was also true at that time. So something has changed, and it's for the sociologists and anthropologists to study this in the future and explain it. But whatever has changed, it's clearly the situation now, and something has to be done about it. I think it's going to have to come from the outside right now.

It's going to have to come from the United States. That's where I'm focused. But this guy, Netanyahu—I don't think he knows what he's doing. I think if you were to really get inside his head, he doesn't care about Israel. I can't imagine that anybody following the policies he's following, and understanding at any level what he's doing to Israel, would care about his country. It's like Adolf Hitler turning Germany into a graveyard.

Germany was a very powerful country when World War II was going on, but Hitler turned Germany into a graveyard. And that's what Netanyahu is doing—he's turning Israel into a graveyard. You know, I'm horrified by it, but the only thing I know how to do is try to influence American policies, because we're the ones who are the co-conspirators in this by allowing it to occur. So when people—when Democrats—basically, I am a Democrat, although I have many Republican friends whom I respect and talk with easily. But when Democrats start complaining to me about Trump, I say, well,

look what Biden did. You know, Biden—the first thing that should have happened after this terrible event of October 2023—he should have gone in there and said, “You cannot respond the way you’re talking about responding.”

You cannot go in there and murder all these innocent people. This is a terrible thing. You have to deal with it, but you cannot go out and do the same kind of murderous, genocidal thing that happened to you. And by the way, a lot of your people killed a lot of Israelis, and you’d better look at that too, because many of the Israelis who were killed in the incursion in October 2023 were killed by Israeli forces firing indiscriminately at people who had been taken prisoner. So it wasn’t a simple situation. We don’t know all the details, but we do know some of them, and we do know that the Israeli Defense Forces played a significant role in killing Israeli citizens, in addition to Hamas. Nobody’s talking about that.

So this is all part of this campaign of misinformation—trying to take these incredibly brutal policies of the current Israeli government and blame everybody else for it. And it doesn’t wash with me, or with a lot of other Americans who are looking at the situation. Something has to be done. Unfortunately, it’s going to take time, but hopefully it’s going to happen. We’ll see. But a lot of unfortunate deaths—which shouldn’t happen and shouldn’t have happened—are going to continue until this thing is brought under control. Netanyahu has to be looked upon, in terms of his behavior, as very much like a Hitler. And I want to be clear about what I’m saying here.

So when people react to what I'm saying, I want to be very clear about what I mean here. Hitler showed no regard for the well-being of the German people. He murdered Germans as much as anybody else did. He was the one who caused the catastrophe in Germany. He was helped by a lot of people, just as Netanyahu is being helped by a lot of people. But the moral judgment about how Hitler behaved and who he was applies just as well to Netanyahu as to Adolf Hitler—no question about it. And if someone wants to debate that with me, I'm happy to have that discussion. I'm not simply calling him a name; I'm talking about moral behavior and his loyalty to his own people. He has shown himself not to care about the well-being of his own people and his own state. And somebody in Israel should do something about it.