Trita Parsi: Nuclear Strike on Iran After Trump Humiliation in the Midterms?

Trita Parsi is the co-founder and Executive Vice President of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Follow his excellent Substack: https://tritaparsi.substack.com/ Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: https://glenndiesen.substack.com/ X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: https://gofund.me/09ea012f Buy Diesen merchandise: https://diesen-shop.fourthwall.com /en-nok Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL 00:00 Trita Parsi on the midterms and Iran war risks 01:02 How a congressional shift could change Trump' s calculations 05:56 What a third round of fighting could involve 10:49 Could Israel strike Iran, and what could follow? 15:48 Iran's warning of no red lines and a wider theater 21:15 When European defensive support becomes participation 23:05 Russia, China, and Iran's air-defense preparations 25: 07 JD Vance's letter and the opening for diplomacy 31:05 Vance's anti-war constituency and White House divisions 35:42 How internal disputes could derail a deal 38:59 The blockade, oil revenues, and the proposed short-term MOU

#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. Today is November 2nd, 2026, and we have the great privilege of being joined by Trita Parsi, the executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and also a prolific author on Substack. I've left a link in the description, so make sure to follow his excellent articles. Thank you for coming back on the program. It's good to see you again.

#Trita Parsi

Good to see you, Glenn. And as you are now officially called "the great Glenn Diesen," as John Mearsheimer put it on his Substack yesterday, it's a title you well deserve.

#Glenn

Thank you. I noticed that this morning. It was quite flattering. I did want to ask you about the midterms. Tomorrow, the United States has its midterm elections, and I was wondering, how do you see this? How will the US midterms shape the Iran war, as well as, I guess, the other wars in the Middle East?

#Trita Parsi

It's a great question, Glenn, because undoubtedly this is something that has really weighed on Trump's mind. But he's not an ordinary president in any shape or form. And as a result, it is frankly a bit unpredictable how he will react to what very likely will be a humiliation at the polls tomorrow, with a decent likelihood that the Republicans will not only clearly lose the House but also lose the Senate. That means that suddenly the balance of power in Washington will have shifted. As you know, the Republicans have controlled all three: the House, the Senate, and the executive branch. And then, of course, they have a majority in the Supreme Court as well. And these are some of the factors that have allowed Trump to move forward so aggressively with his agenda.

The ability to push back has been very limited. That's going to change after the midterms, most likely. But he is not a usual president. A usual president, after losing the midterms, would become a lame duck, would have greater difficulty pushing through his agenda, and would probably also become a little bit more risk-averse going forward. Trump may very well become the opposite, in the sense that, as a humiliated entity, he will now become even more reckless and potentially take even greater risks, including vis-à-vis Iran. He clearly holds a tremendous amount of anger toward Iran instead of toward himself and the Israelis, blaming the Iranians for why he's doing so badly in the midterms and blaming the Iranians for having dragged out negotiations in order to destroy his presidency.

Now, undoubtedly, destroying his presidency is clearly part of the thinking on the Iranian side. It may not be the decisive driving force in any way, shape, or form, but it's not as if they haven't thought of it or, frankly, haven't signaled that this is what they would do if he attacked them in the first place. So there is a likelihood that, because of his anger toward Iran, because he will blame them for his humiliation at the midterms, he actually will become even more reckless. But then the question becomes, okay, what can a Congress that is controlled by the Democrats do? And the reality is, they actually can do quite a lot. They control the purse. They can defund the war.

He will be able to find funding elsewhere, or he can do some creative accounting to be able to continue it. But nevertheless, it will be an obstacle. It will be a challenge to what he's trying to do. I think the Democrats are very likely going to go for the impeachment of some of his secretaries. Most likely, the first one will be Pete Hegseth. He may force Hegseth to resign. He may fire Hegseth and make him a scapegoat. He will have tremendous difficulty finding a new secretary of war or defense, whatever the title ends up being, who is acceptable to the Democrats. So that will also potentially create a challenge, because Hegseth has been a very loyal enforcer of Trump's desires when it comes to war.

And so that will be a factor that needs to be taken into account. But it can also lead to a scenario in which Trump falls for the Israeli argument, which is that, precisely because of the significant challenges he will face from January onwards, when the new Congress comes into power, his window to continue the war and try to win it is between November 3rd and January 20th, or

whenever it is that the new Congress comes into action. It's a bit earlier than that. And this can very well lead to a scenario in which he may very seriously consider some completely unthinkable and dramatically escalatory steps in the next two months. That scenario should not be belittled.

Remember, after he lost his election in November 2020, it was between November 2020 and January 6th, 2021, that we saw him at his most reckless, in his most risk-accepting mode. And that's, of course, when we saw not only the January 6th attacks that he endorsed, but also his efforts during that period to start a war with Iran in order to avoid a peaceful transfer of power. Essentially, he was trying to make sure he could stay president by having started that war. So I think there's going to be a very, very dangerous period from after the midterms until January, particularly if he is profoundly humiliated at the polls tomorrow.

#Glenn

Well, you probably saw the comments of Senator Chris Murphy, who said that he had been briefed about the war plans for this third war, or third round of war, against Iran. And he labeled it an insane war plan. Well, one doesn't take a lot of comfort from this. And Tucker Carlson—again, he doesn't have access to these papers—but I think he came out yesterday or today arguing that it's very likely that Trump, after being humiliated in the midterms, might consider a nuclear strike on Pickaxe Mountain, where purportedly the Iranians still have at least the uranium, if they're not enriching more. I'm not quite clear. Again, I guess nobody is quite certain what's beneath it, but this appears to be where U.S. intelligence is pointing. So what do you think we could expect if Trump goes back? Because this is not going to be like the first two rounds, I assume.

#Trita Parsi

So, look, Senator Murphy, who I hope is now recovering from a stroke that he suffered a couple of days after posting that video of himself—I think he was at one of the think tanks in D.C.—probably saw validation of what I and many others have said, including on your show, would likely happen in the third round, based on what the Israelis were saying, what Trump himself was saying, as well as conversations I had with folks on the American side. Trump is saying that this would be quick. But let me take a step back. First of all, we do know that it would be a major escalation.

There are clear signs that they would be targeting energy infrastructure, critical infrastructure, and desalination plants. This is something that Trump had avoided doing to a large extent in the previous two rounds. But in this round, he would go all out. The Israelis have said it very clearly. They want to do all of this. They wanted to do it in the previous rounds. Trump kept them out of the second round precisely because he didn't trust that they wouldn't do it—that they wouldn't go to a level of escalation that Trump was not comfortable with at the time. But if he's now comfortable with it and he does it together with Israel, the Israelis have said very clearly—the Israeli defense minister said on Israeli TV—"We want to bomb them back to the Stone Age, set them back 30, 40 years."

And it's important to understand that, from an Israeli standpoint, that is a strategic success: just being able to list how much destruction they have inflicted on Iran, just as they see the amount of destruction they've inflicted on Gaza as a success. That is not a metric that the United States, in any way, shape, or form, usually uses in wars. I've never seen an American politician stand next to images of destruction in Mosul and use that as the metric of success. The Israelis do this all the time, however. So, from their standpoint, just being able to bomb as much as possible is, in and of itself, a strategic success.

But when he says that this would be very quick, that it would be over within a couple of days, that definitely fuels suspicion that he is thinking about using either a MOAB—a "mother of all bombs"—or potentially nuclear weapons as a way of just doing something quick. The calculation is that the Iranians would be prevented from responding. And then, from there on, the plan is that he would either accept their surrender or enter negotiations in which, in effect, the U.S. would get all of its demands met. What's fascinating, beyond the insanity of this, of course, is that the Iranians have already planned for this. They've already had meetings, and they have made a decision: they will not become Japan.

That was the decision, meaning that even if the United States uses nuclear weapons against Iran, the Iranians will not capitulate. They will not surrender like Japan did. They will continue the fight, and they've already put in place plans for how they would do so and the systems that would enable them to continue the war effort, even if central command is destroyed. Some of those elements were already put in place after June last year, but nevertheless. So when Chris Murphy is saying that this would destroy any credibility that the United States has in terms of respecting American and international law, it gives you a hint that, whether it includes a nuclear weapon or not, this is not war planning. This is war crimes planning that the administration has done with the Israelis.

#Glenn

Well, it did occur to me that even if the U.S. wouldn't go through with it, Trump might be more likely to greenlight the Israelis doing it. And I see them as having less to lose. I mean, what would they risk? They don't have much of an international reputation. And if the Iranians go all out against the Gulf states, then I guess that's not the end of the world for Israel either. It's an added plus. It's a bonus. So what is stopping Israel from using a nuclear weapon against Iran?

#Trita Parsi

I think they do have their own concerns and considerations. I do think it is easier for the Israelis to do it than for the United States. I think there are more checks and balances, even within the Trump administration. The Israelis, of course, are now also at a stage where they don't have a new government. So there's a caretaker government with Netanyahu still in power, which may actually

push him to go further in this. We have seen pushback from the Israeli military at various times. Will they push back on this issue? I don't think Netanyahu would be pushing on an open door if he were to try to do this. I think the Israelis also know what the Iranians managed to do to Israel.

In the June war of last year, as well as in this war, their military censorship has never been as extensive as it is now. That in and of itself tells you about the tremendous damage the Israelis suffered. And even if they use a nuclear weapon against Pickaxe Mountain, for instance, that does not in any way, shape, or form, in and of itself, limit Iran's ability to strike at Israel. In fact, it appears that Iran's ability to strike effectively at Israel is stronger than it was in June of last year, as well as February and July of this year, because, A, production capacity and supply chain robustness on the Iranian side have always been stronger than on the Israeli and American sides when it comes to the production of missiles versus the production of interceptors.

And so, in the missiles-versus-interceptors game, the math is clearly on the Iranian side and continues to be. Secondly, when you take a look at the reporting, for instance, in The Wall Street Journal, you see not only that the Iranians were very, very effective and sophisticated in the way they struck American bases, but also that their effectiveness and sophistication kept on growing, despite the fact that the U.S. and Israel were successful in destroying a lot of Iranian capabilities. What that tells you, I think, is that the Iranian learning curve has been far, far faster than the American and Israeli learning curve when it comes to the war.

The Iranians have improved faster than the U.S. and Israel have when it comes to dealing with these specific issues. And then the third factor is that the Iranians, in this second round, have been striking a lot of the American bases in Jordan deliberately to take out the various capabilities that the Americans and Jordanians have there that are used to detect Iranian missiles at an early stage and shoot them down. So a lot of the radars, intelligence capabilities, and so on that are needed to shoot down Iranian missiles were destroyed in Jordan during this period.

And as a result, the Israelis' capacity to maintain a sufficiently high success rate has probably been degraded. The Israelis know this. So just taking out Pickaxe Mountain is not going to be sufficient. I don't see that scenario. I see only a scenario in which they do that combined with a massive bombing campaign and an effort to overwhelm the Iranians so that they cannot shoot back, which, again, based on what we've seen so far, seems extremely unlikely to succeed. So it will have a massive cost for Israel.

#Glenn

Yeah, and this whole plan of keeping it short and intense—I mean, if you're going to keep it short, it has to be intense, which means that the targeting would have to go well beyond military targets. So we're talking critical infrastructure, energy. I guess the problem there is that the Iranians will get a vote as well, though, on whether or not this is over in three days. Because if the U.S. sheds all restraint, one would assume the Iranians will do the same. And you can imagine what would happen

to the Gulf states. I mean, the Iranians can bring a lot of pain there. But how do you assess the ability of the U.S. to fight beyond those three days at this point in time? Because, yes, the Iranians have strengthened their industrial capacity and had the steep learning curve you referred to. But the U.S., with its bases and infrastructure—how capable are they of fighting now?

#Trita Parsi

So, a couple of things on this that I think are important. First, you said one would presume that the Iranians would strike back very hard as well. I think the Iranians have actually been crystal clear in some of their signaling just in the last couple of days. The new Supreme Leader's message made a couple of things very clear. First—and the foreign minister, Araghchi, tweeted this at the Europeans as well—there are no more red lines, meaning that in a third war, the Iranians will not respect any external red lines or any internal red lines. No limitations. Secondly, no more geographical limitations, meaning that the theater of war, the geography of the war, will be limitless. And we already saw that the war was very successfully escalated horizontally in the first and second rounds.

Now they're sending very clear public and private messages to the Europeans, saying, "You will be targeted if your bases in any way, shape, or form are being used in the American and Israeli war effort." And I would suspect—I'm not sure, but this is pure speculation on my end—that even if they don't allow the bases to be used, but they do what they did in 2024 and 2025, when a lot of European resources were used to identify and shoot down Iranian missiles targeting Israel in retaliatory strikes, that too will bring them into the war. And the Iranians will consider attacks on European soil to be justified because of the role that Europe plays, even though it might be defensive in the minds of the Europeans.

So when they say no red lines, internal or external, I suspect that's what they mean. Any role for the Europeans in the war will be seen by the Iranians as European participation in that war. And as a result, they will be legitimate targets. Now, whether the Iranians have the capacity or not, you know, there are question marks, but they did strike at Diego Garcia. And I think the operation, whatever it was, against the U.S. base in the U.K. was most likely an effort designed to be caught.

But it was a warning to the Americans and to the Brits that they have the capability and the intent to strike from within British territory against American bases. And clearly, whatever the threat was, it was serious enough for the United States to move all of its planes out of that base. So I think the Europeans should take these kinds of warnings from the Iranian side very, very seriously. Then I think there's another element of his speech that has not been fully understood. Ayatollah Khamenei says that there will be no return to any state other than peace or war, meaning there will either be peace or there will be war. There will not be what we have right now.

There will be no in-between status. This is very important because it essentially suggests that if a third round is fought, it will be fought until there is a victory or a peace deal. They will not accept going back to the current type of status again. But that also means—and this is important—that,

from the Iranian perspective, they will not undermine a peace in order to go back to the type of scenario we have right now. And this is a concern on the American side. The Americans are very concerned that another deal with the Iranians, in which the U.S. lifts the blockade, will allow the Iranians to sell a lot of oil in a very short period of time, and then the Iranians will go back to shooting ships.

And there will be a return to the current stalemate, but with the Iranians having filled their coffers with a lot of oil revenue. This is a concern that exists on the American side. I think Khamenei's message, to a certain extent, seems to be intended to alleviate that concern by saying that if there is peace, the only alternative to peace is war—not going back to the current stalemate in which there's a blockade and a counter-blockade, etc. I'm not so sure that message has been fully understood on the American side. And the suspicions on both sides are so deep that it's really difficult for them to accept it, even if they understand the intent behind it.

#Glenn

About giving up on all red lines in terms of the territory they might strike: well, first, the whole discussion is about how the Europeans should take into account what amounts to involvement. Because in the academic literature, there's a lot on the whole offense-defense balance. And even when you have purely defensive weapons like air defenses, they can still be used offensively if they enable an attack. So yes, of course, if they help to shoot down Iran's retaliatory strikes, then they're obviously also participating in an offensive war if the U.S. went in aggressively here, particularly on that issue.

#Trita Parsi

But if the Israelis and the Americans are the ones starting the war, which is what has happened so far, going in and saying that this is only defensive help really doesn't pass muster. If the Iranians were doing this in Ukraine, or if they were allowing Russia to use Iranian bases to attack Ukraine, there's no doubt in anyone's mind that the Europeans would view Iran as an active combatant in that war and would feel that any Ukrainian attack on Iran would be legitimate. And we already know that there's been one in the Caspian Sea. So if the roles were reversed, there would be no debate as to whether Iran—or Europe, in the current situation—is actually involved in that war.

#Glenn

Well, I'm guessing that, in terms of weapons, targeting, or intelligence, they might also get some assistance from Russia. I mean, the Europeans have contributed to the deaths of countless Russians now, so it wouldn't be unthinkable. I mean, the Europeans can fight through a Ukrainian proxy. The Russians can't really fire back. But if they have Iran, and Iran wants to strike at the Europeans, well, it doesn't take that much imagination to expect Russia to assist them in what Iran would consider to be self-defense. But I haven't seen any indications or any language suggesting that from either the

Iranians or the Russians. That being said, it would be very destructive if they did. But how do you see that possibility? You and I have spoken about that before—that is, the European war and the Middle Eastern war essentially merging to a greater extent. Yeah. No...

#Trita Parsi

What we talked about before, though, I think might be a bit different, Glenn, in the sense that that was speculation at the time. Well, it wasn't entirely speculation, because I know that at least Zelensky himself was pushing it in conversations with the U.S. administration, perhaps not as clearly articulated as you and I discussed it. But this, I suspect, would be more of a slippery slope into that scenario rather than a Russian decision to actually risk that type of direct confrontation between Russia and Europe. Of course, the Russians have played some role in supporting Iran in this war.

But I have to say, whatever the Russian and Chinese roles have been, they seem to have been quite negligible compared to the massive amount of resources and money that the Europeans and the Americans have sent to Ukraine, for instance. And I do think that there is a lot of frustration on the Iranian side about the extent of the support they received from Russia and China, which, by and large, appears to have been mostly on the intelligence side rather than in the form of actual weapons. There are rumors now that, since the indirect ceasefire following round two, the Chinese have been putting in new air defense systems in Iran.

I don't know if that's true. I don't know whether they're the most advanced ones that the Chinese have, the ones they've sold to the Pakistanis. I don't know to what extent the Iranians will be able to use them effectively in such a short period of time. So there are a lot of question marks about that. But given the fact that the Iranians more or less believe that a third round was close to inevitable, it would be surprising to me if they weren't doing something to dramatically improve their own air defense systems, which clearly have been insufficient.

#Glenn

But as the war looks more and more likely, and you're going to have a very unstable political situation after the midterms, I think all sides recognize that such a war would be disastrous for everyone and also uncontrollable in terms of escalation, be it vertical or horizontal. So there have also been some positive signs, I guess, of a willingness to perhaps negotiate. A good example would be that I heard J.D. Vance sent a letter to the Iranians.

Professor Marandi has told me that it was remarkably different from what they had received in the past—that it was more friendly, or perhaps not friendly, but less insulting. So it seemed it could be interpreted as a willingness to seek a diplomatic breakthrough. And again, it would also be an ideal time to try to get diplomacy going, now that there's a real, credible threat of engaging in a massive, all-out war, possibly with nuclear weapons. This is also a good opportunity to start diplomacy as an alternative, even if you can use the threat of war as leverage. So how do you see this? Do you get

any positive signals? Because they usually go hand in hand, with the threat of all-out war used for diplomacy as well.

#Trita Parsi

Absolutely. It's very important to understand that when you hear louder threats, it obviously could mean that we're getting closer to a war, but it could also be because diplomacy is intensifying. And as part of that, unfortunately, this is just a reality: you are negotiating within a state of active war, even though there may not be active kinetic action right now. And of course, from the U.S. side, this is a very common thing. A superpower's comparative advantage is its ability to use force, so it is not going to be shy about using it. And certainly no one would accuse the United States, particularly under the Trump administration, of being shy about using it. But I am picking up some positive signals.

It's going back and forth, of course. Nothing has been set. There are still some very, very significant challenges. But there are also some very positive developments that have happened. First of all, the letter was, by and large, positively received—not because of its content, but, from what I've been told, because they saw it as a genuine, legitimate, authentic effort to de-escalate. They saw Vance as someone who is genuinely trying to help de-escalate the situation. And the fact that he got the green light from the president to send the letter also signals his ability to get Trump on board—that the Iranians are negotiating with someone who actually has the authority.

This has been a question mark on the Iranian side under the Trump administration. Usually, this is a problem that is often raised by the American side: they don't know who they're negotiating with and whether those negotiators actually have the authority to make decisions or speak for the system as a whole. I think the most important thing that has given me a glimmer of hope is the fact that, on the issue of lifting the blockade, the U.S. side appears to be shifting a bit, perhaps not sufficiently. And I want to be very, very careful: I'm talking about a glimmer of hope against the backdrop of a very, very negative situation over the last couple of weeks.

But nevertheless, we're not where we were two weeks ago, when the U.S. position essentially was that they didn't care if the Iranians opened the strait; they would not lift the blockade, but rather would use it as leverage for nuclear concessions. And there's just no scenario in which the Iranians would agree to that. In fact, it's just one of many demands they have. And as long as Trump kept on insisting on this, living in this mythology that the strait is already open and that the Iranians opening the strait is therefore a meaningless concession, it was just very difficult to see any progress being made. That appears to have changed a bit. It probably needs to change more before there can be success.

But both sides have really walked up to the edge of the abyss. They're very clear-eyed about what the war would mean. They may not be clear-eyed about what the current situation is. And I think, at least in terms of where Trump is on this, he isn't clear-eyed. But I think he is clear-eyed about what

the consequences of war would be. So are the Iranians. And that, I think, in some ways may help both of them take the necessary steps back from the edge of the abyss where they currently stand. And I think in the next 24 to 48 hours, we should be able to get a very clear sense as to whether this is an effort that will lead to results, or if it was a good effort but not sufficient.

#Glenn

Well, it was probably a good idea to have J.D. Vance approach the Iranians because, as you said, he seems more genuine or authentic in terms of wanting to choose the more peaceful path. I also remember that, as we learned from those leaked conversations about the U.S. attacks on Yemen, he was apparently the one who pushed back the hardest, essentially seeking to maintain the concept of America First as meaning no more of these Middle Eastern wars. So he does seem to be, at least in the Trump administration, the peacemaker. But it kind of begs the question of...

#Trita Parsi

If I could just make a quick comment on that, I do think that is absolutely true. I mean, President Trump himself has said publicly that Vance was not in favor of this war. And I think we've seen a clear pattern. He's not been in favor of many of the military actions that Trump has taken. And he was not part of the mix on Venezuela either, even though, of course, from the American side, that has been deemed to be a great success, at least so far. I think it's important to recognize that Vance's own constituency tends to be younger Republicans who are far more dedicated to the idea of no more wars, far more critical of Israel's role in pushing the U.S. into various wars, and far less inclined to just be part of MAGA for some sort of cultish reason.

And as a result, it puts more pressure on Vance to push back against these things. He has to show his constituency within the Trump coalition that he is staying true to those principles. And I'm sure there are plenty in that constituency who may think that he should have done more, who may not be happy about how far he's gone. But I do find it fascinating that the distance Vance has from the current policy is the greatest distance I've ever seen a vice president have from the actual policy of the president at any point. I mean, just compare it with the distance Kamala Harris had from anything Biden was doing. It was essentially nonexistent.

And when she tried to get a little bit of leeway of her own and be her own person during the campaign, when she had become the nominee, Biden came clamping down on her and said, “You are not allowed to have any daylight between your campaign and Biden’s policies.” I think that is a key reason why she lost. Whereas now, you’re actually seeing a remarkable distance. I’m not saying it’s sufficient or anything like that, but just comparatively, it’s objectively very, very wide. Now, that may be more because of how unconventional Trump’s administration is in general. But nevertheless, there is a distance there that is beyond anything I think anyone can point to in recent memory.

#Glenn

I wonder if that can be, again, an advantage. I mean, this insistence that everyone in an administration speaks with one voice can have benefits in terms of looking more principled. But that being said, it seems like it is kind of in Trump's playbook, if you will, to have a bit of a wider variety, giving himself some room to maneuver in terms of who will speak on an issue. I mean, I remember after his first administration, he was making the point that it was a good idea to have Bolton there because he was there to represent Trump's angry side, essentially, the threatening side of Trump. But there's a bit of a difference there.

#Trita Parsi

Yeah, there's a bit of a difference there because he likes to have—and he's not alone in this—more dovish and more hawkish voices within the administration. That's not unusual. What is more unusual is to then, once there is a policy, allow some of them to have a degree of distance from that policy, particularly when it is a very central policy, such as starting a war. That, I think, is something that is not commonly seen. And it's not just in the sense of rumors about it, but even in interviews. For instance, in the interview with Rogan, when Vance was asked about it, he did not deny that he was against the war. He just said, "Look, my job right now is to make sure that the president's policy is successful," in that way implicitly confirming that he's against this war.

#Glenn

How does this internal division otherwise affect his administration? Because they are internally divided. I mean, is it just an opportunity, especially if they want to negotiate now as well? Because it does look like some in his administration are pushing for all-out war—you know, whatever Israel wants—and others, like J.D. Vance, are more apprehensive. What I'm asking is, are they all instruments of Trump, and he can choose which piece to play, or are they essentially playing him?

#Trita Parsi

I don't think they're playing him, in the sense that, at the end of the day, the final decision-maker is Trump himself, and they're all trying to influence him. If there's anyone who's playing Trump, I would say it's the Israelis, by pushing so aggressively this mythology of how weak the Iranian state was and how easily it would capitulate or collapse. And even then, we do know that there was pushback within the administration, but Trump seemed to have been enamored with that and agreed to it. So, you know, he bears the ultimate responsibility, of course. But in the sense of putting forward something that was really not well grounded, I don't think anyone has done it as aggressively as the Israelis have. Now, there are clear divisions within the government on this issue.

And I think if there is a real movement towards diplomacy and if there is a deal, it's a moment in which those divisions are once again going to become very, very dangerous. Because several key people within the administration started to push back against the MOU almost instantaneously after

it was reached. And I think we've talked about it before. I think history is going to look back at this and realize that what Marco Rubio was doing initially, with his visit to the GCC states, completely contradicted the MOU and the process of finding a workable solution. During that visit, he very aggressively pushed them to sign on to a statement that essentially said that there could be no change to the status of the strait compared to what it was on February 27th.

And then he flew to Israel and Lebanon and signed that trilateral agreement, pushing the Lebanese government very hard to agree to it, which then completely contradicted the MOU on Lebanon. Because the MOU on Lebanon said that the Israelis would have to withdraw from Lebanon. There would be a region-wide ceasefire. Obviously, Hezbollah would have to stop shooting at Israel as well. But the trilateral agreement essentially said that there would be no withdrawal by the Israelis until Hezbollah had been disarmed, which means that there would be war or civil war, and that disarmament would most likely not happen. It kind of legitimized Israel's presence in southern Lebanon and its destruction of southern Lebanon. And the Lebanese government foolishly signed on to this. If the MOU had not collapsed over the strait, it would have collapsed over Lebanon.

And these were, you know, poison pills that Rubio very aggressively pushed. You know, Rubio had stayed away from this issue. He was mostly focusing on other issues, including his pet project, Cuba. And then he suddenly showed up in the Persian Gulf just a day or two after the MOU. So I think if the administration wants to keep the deal, yes, they have their suspicions about divisions in Iran and the IRGC working against the deal and things of that nature. Perhaps it's true. Perhaps it's exaggerated. Nevertheless, it would be foolish not to focus on their own internal saboteurs as well, including, of course, Israeli saboteurs who are working in Washington, because these divisions were a problem when there was a diplomatic deal and will be a problem again if another one is reached.

#Glenn

As a last question about Iran, obviously they're ready to fight, but this would also be a very devastating war for them. So they have made some diplomatic gestures. They offered to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, although, you know, in reality, they would still have administrative controls. I'm not sure exactly what that would entail. But nonetheless, they said they would do this in return for the U.S. lifting the naval blockade, releasing some frozen Iranian assets, easing the sanctions, and, of course, offering this ceasefire in Lebanon. Again, in this deal or proposal, I think Qatar was mediating, but Washington did not accept this. Do you see the Iranians at least attempting to give the Americans an off-ramp on this so Trump has an alternative? Because he ramped up the war rhetoric to such an extent that if there isn't an off-ramp, it looks very dark for everyone.

#Trita Parsi

Yeah. The Iranians don't believe any longer that face-saving exits are what will really make a difference here. So they're taking very, very tough negotiating positions right now. But they have tried to address what is, at the end of the day, the core problem from the American side. The

American side is really worried that the Iranians will, as I mentioned, benefit by selling a very large amount of oil during the period in which the new MOU, whatever it would be called, would be in place, but eventually turn against the agreement and go back to the current status, but with their coffers filled with a lot of oil revenue. So when it comes to the issue of matching reversible concessions with reversible concessions, and irreversible concessions with irreversible concessions...

The Iranian position, of course, is that if they ship out the HEU, the 60% enriched uranium, that's an irreversible concession. The American side says that lifting the blockade is also, in a way, irreversible. Because, yes, the U.S. can reinstate the blockade. It will take some time, but it can reinstate it. But the revenue the Iranians will gain during the period in which the blockade has been lifted is irreversible. The Iranians are going to keep that money. And as a result, the Americans are making the argument that it is fair for the Iranians to put nuclear concessions on the table to get the blockade lifted because of that symmetry in irreversibility. The Iranians don't buy it.

I find the argument somewhat questionable as well, but nevertheless, what the Iranians have done to try to meet the Americans halfway and address their key concern is to say that instead of having a 60-day MOU, it would be a seven-day MOU. And now they've even gone down to five or even two days. What they're trying to say is that there's no way the Iranians can sell 60 million barrels of oil in five days. So if you're worried that during the period before you get to serious nuclear negotiations, the Iranians will sell a lot of oil and then never move to the nuclear negotiations, okay, perhaps that's a valid concern with a 60-day window. But for a five-day window or a two-day window, there's just no revenue. They're not going to be able to move that many tankers through the strait and sell that oil in such a short period of time. And so they've agreed to reduce that window as a way of alleviating the American concern.

#Glenn

So far, it doesn't appear to have moved the Americans that much.

#Trita Parsi

But again, I'm not sure if there's been any significant movement on this specific issue in the last couple of hours. But it is a key element that needs to be resolved before there can be a final deal.

#Glenn

Well, regarding Trump's direction after the midterms, I guess we'll find out over the next few days. At least the world will probably look like a very different place this time next week. So, yeah, thank you so much for taking the time and shedding some light on this.

#Trita Parsi

Thank you so much. Appreciate it, Glenn.