

Chas Freeman: Israel's Agenda Is Collapsing Faster Than Anyone Expected

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Friday, April 24th, 2026, and our dear friend, Ambassador Chas Freeman, is here with us. Welcome back, Ambassador.

#Chas

Glad to be with you, Nima.

#Nima

Ambassador, let me start with the current situation in the war between Iran and the United States. We've learned from the Chinese that they're asking their citizens to leave Iran. That happened before the war started, and right now they're asking the same. We have three aircraft carriers in the region — George H.W. Bush, Abraham Lincoln, and Gerald Ford — all together. What is your understanding of the situation in the Middle East?

#Chas

Well, we're in a lull in the fighting. It's not over. The so-called ceasefire is not really a ceasefire. It's a make-believe ceasefire. That is to say, the blockade itself is, as Iran has claimed, a violation of the ceasefire. It was imposed after the so-called ceasefire. And in effect, it is not so much a blockade of Iran as it is a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and therefore the global oil supply. So it's a blockade against every other country in the world, not just Iran. So we're in a war of attrition, basically — now a diplomatic phase in that war of attrition. I think it's kind of funny to hear what is being said about Iran by the Trump administration.

I don't think they understand Iran at all. He claims that the Iranian government is terribly divided. I think there are, in fact, differences of opinion. The Foreign Ministry has one set of opinions, of course, because its job is to engage in diplomacy. But the rulers, the GC, have a different idea. And they seem to be completely united. And so the statement that somehow the Iranian government is

too divided to make a decision is frankly absurd. The Trump administration is, in fact, seriously divided internally. The only thing it can produce is an ultimatum. It can't actually mount a negotiation.

So the Iranian judgment is there's no point in talking to the Trump administration at this point. Mr. Trump believes that time is on his side, he says. I don't think that's the case. First of all, Iran has shown an amazing ability to accept pain and carry on. It is a proud country and it will not easily submit. On the other hand, the US Navy, the three aircraft carriers you mentioned, and the other ships accompanying them are in pretty sad condition. The morale is low, the equipment is failing, the sailors apparently don't get enough to eat. The basic supplies are running out. Logistical support is not there.

So how long can the United States sustain this blockade? It's a real question I think people need to focus on, and I haven't seen much discussion of it. We do now know that the arsenal of the United States and Israel has been seriously depleted, which was Iran's strategy all along. But I think there are several flies in the ointment, as it were. One is the so-called ceasefire in Lebanon. That is an absurd ceasefire because it's basically a ceasefire between the Lebanese government, which has never been fighting Israel at all and is not defending Lebanon, and the Israelis who violate the ceasefire at will. So nobody's ceasing fire.

Hezbollah, which is defending Lebanon, continues to fight Israel and repudiates the so-called ceasefire. Mr. Trump has just extended that for three weeks. I'm not quite sure what the point of that is. I suppose he's trying to appease Iran, but I don't think that will succeed. Anyway, I think, as I said, this is a lull. We're very likely to see a resumption of the fighting. In the meantime, everything that the United States does in terms of its blockade of Iran or efforts to clear mines in the Strait of Hormuz is matched with a comparable move by Iran. So it's tit-for-tat. And there's no obvious way out of this. So, you know, in the meantime, the clock is ticking.

Countries all over the world are running out of not just oil, but fertilizer, aluminum, helium for the production of semiconductors, urea, ammonia, fertilizer, of course, sulfur. All these things for which the Persian Gulf is central have now been in terribly short supply. We're seeing the beginning of a lot of inflation. And the United States has suffered huge reputational damage. You can see NATO falling apart before your very eyes. Apparently, the Pentagon is now trying to figure out how to punish Spain or maybe suspend it from NATO because Spain has emerged as the conscience of Europe on matters in West Asia. Pedro Sánchez is the leader of a democratic bloc, which just met to consider how to defend democracy against the United States.

And, you know, there are countries, for example, to your south — Uruguay is one of the most democratic countries in the world. And there is a movement now to associate democracies against American pressure. So the United States is treating NATO as a bunch of auxiliary fighters, people, vassal states that have to follow the United States wherever it goes. And of course, NATO — the North Atlantic Treaty — is a defensive alliance and related only to Europe, not to West Asia or

anywhere else. So I think what's happening is NATO is falling apart. So what is happening is not so much in and around the Strait of Hormuz, but the rippling effects of this globally are beginning to be felt very far away.

#Nima

Actually, the Trump administration has divided NATO countries into two sides, naughty and good. And they're talking about the United Kingdom, France, and somehow Germany — they're naughty, and the others, Poland, Romania, and the Baltics, are good allies of NATO.

#Chas

Well, we have the Polish prime minister expressing doubt that NATO membership is worth anything in terms of defending Poland against Russia, which is its traditional enemy. So, you know, I don't think that division works. And meanwhile, with the defeat of Viktor Orbán in Hungary, we see the end of the defense of Israel within the European Union. The veto that Orbán wielded on behalf of Israel is gone. Israel's looking for another Trojan horse to enter the EU citadel, but hasn't found it yet.

And of course, Péter Magyar, the new prime minister in Hungary, while he's conducting a democratic counter-revolution domestically, is not changing Hungarian foreign policy very effectively. I mean, he said he wants to talk to Vladimir Putin. He's not going to cut off oil supply from Russia. He did not veto a loan to Ukraine, but he did not approve it either, and Hungary will not participate. So Hungarian national interests, it seems, are not being redefined in foreign policy, even if domestically there's a real effort to open up the country to free speech, academic freedom, and other things that were compromised under the Orbán government.

#Nima

Ambassador, Donald Trump tweeted this, and later on he removed it. And it says, one of the few tweets that he does: "I just finished a great phone call with the Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, a very smart and tough leader. He agreed that the United States can use their airfield if Iran refuses to uphold the peace deal, which will be reached. Believe me, he says that Iran is weak and broken and they have no choice. Pashinyan gets it. If they don't follow the deal, we will hit them so hard they won't know what happened."

And Armenia will help big time. Thank you to Prime Minister Pashinyan. Very legal and very fair, sad for Iran and so on. Pashinyan and Armenia, I don't know how they feel about it, because this is a little country with, you know, the population is not significant. The power, the military power they have is not significant for Iran, and they can be destroyed the way that UAE and Qatar and the GCC—there is a lesson in the Persian Gulf to be learned. But it doesn't seem that is perceived by Armenia.

#Chas

Well, first of all, we only have Donald Trump's account of this conversation, and he has a way of distorting the facts. So we don't know. But certainly, Armenia is an important country, mainly because there are so many Armenians around the world, not so much in Armenia. There is a big American Armenian community, lots of Armenians in Lebanon and in Iran. And so Armenia has influence beyond its size. It's also a major recipient of American aid, or it has been. I don't know the current situation since USAID was destroyed by the Trump administration. I suspect there's some sort of bribe involved in this alleged arrangement to use Armenian airfields. But I think from the point of view of Mr. Pashinyan, the Armenian leader, this is not a good deal for exactly the reason you mentioned, that Armenia will now be targeted by Iran.

It has not really been targeted. Azerbaijan, which is the opponent of Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, has been very much under Israeli influence. So I have some difficulty understanding exactly what this tweet means. What it clearly does mean is that Iran is going to target Armenia if there's a resumption of the fighting, which I think there will be. That's why, to go back to your original report, presumably the Chinese made a judgment that there is going to be a resumption of the fighting. And that it will be aimed at infrastructure, which is where most of the Chinese investment activity in Iran is located. So I think it's significant that the Chinese have decided that the war is going to resume its kinetic phase.

#Nima

Ambassador, I think we have some sort of understanding of what has happened so far with the war against Iran. We had J.D. Vance in June 2024, before June 2025, arguing that this president is going to be different and this war is going to be different. Here is what he said.

#Speaker 03

I empathize with Americans who are exhausted after 25 years of foreign entanglements in the Middle East. I understand the concern, but the difference is that back then we had dumb presidents, and now we have a president who actually knows how to accomplish America's national security objectives. So this is not going to be some long, drawn-out thing. We've gone in, we've done the job of setting their nuclear program back. We're going to now work to permanently dismantle that nuclear program over the coming years, and that is what the president has set out to do.

Simple principle: Iran can't have a nuclear weapon. That has animated American policy over the past 130 days. It's going to continue to be a driving force of our policy in the Middle East for the next three and a half years.

#Nima

The other point, Ambassador, is this one. As the State Department pointed out, the United States is engaged in this conflict at the request of, and in collective self-defense of, Israel, its ally. And this is... Go ahead. How can you put these two together?

#Chas

Well, you can. And it's a reminder that J.D. Vance has a law degree, and, you know, what lawyers are taught is if your client is guilty, you can still claim the client is innocent and you make the best argument you can. And that's what you just heard him do. It's frankly not very persuasive. First of all, nobody thinks previous presidents were dumb. Many people think Donald Trump is dumb. So this idea that the difference is that we've now got a president who's got his act together doesn't take you very far, if anywhere. So that is not a convincing defense of the policy. And of course, we all know that while Donald Trump was predisposed to follow Israeli advice for various reasons, partly his campaign has been financed by people with strong attachments to Israel who insist that he follow through on commitments to them to support Israel.

But there's also the Epstein files, and it's very clear that Israel has compromising information in its possession, which could destroy Mr. Trump with his Christian nationalist base. So we all know that the result of this is that he's not just predisposed to follow Netanyahu's direction, he is following it. And we have the example of the very same Vice President, J.D. Vance, emerging from Islamabad, as Netanyahu said, "Well, he was reporting to me," you know, as though he was some kind of subordinate, which in effect I think he is because of the position that his boss, the president, is in with regard to Israel. So, yeah, these contradictions can't be overcome. And we go on.

#Chas

There is no American interest whatsoever at stake with regard to Iran that is being served by this war. If the interest is non-proliferation, then what about Israel, which has proliferated? And I believe that at Islamabad, the Iranian side said that they would dismantle their nuclear program if Israel did. But of course, Israel will not. So there's no non-proliferation interest. The regime has not changed in Iran. If anything, it has gotten tougher and more nationalistic and hardline. Iran has not lost its ability to strike back when attacked. And if we have another round of exchange of fire, Iran will fire heavily at Israel, and I suppose now, Armenia too.

What that will do with the Gulf is being determined by dialogue between the Gulf countries and Iran. Whether they would continue to hit the Gulf or not is another question. But the idea also that somehow or other the United States had a responsibility to protect protesters in Iran, if that was the objective, it's not been accomplished. Iran is buttoned up tight. And we've seen the usual result of coercive measures on other countries. That is to say, they rally behind the flag. They don't give up. I don't know of any example where air power attacking and destroying things in another country has led to its capitulation. It hasn't happened yet anywhere, really, and Iran is not going to be the exception.

#Nima

Yesterday, the Israeli Defense Minister said that they're ready for the United States to give them the green light to go. And I would assume that if something happens, it's going to be, as you've mentioned, an aerial bombardment of civilians, and we are going to see death and destruction in Iran.

#Chas

You'll see it in Israel as well. We still don't know the extent of the death and destruction in Israel, or for that matter with regard to the American forces, because there's been a cover-up in both cases. It's understandable why that would be the case. But, you know, I think Israel—yes, Israel has an objective of destroying Iran, which means that Iran has an objective of destroying Israel. And if Israel is destroyed, it will be the result of Israeli decisions. You know, that Israel has put itself at risk, not Iran.

#Nima

They're having difficulties in the southern part of Lebanon. Today we've learned they're taking casualties at a rate they have never experienced before. This is the new phase of the war with Hezbollah. And at the same time, they want to continue the war with Iran. I assume that the only reason for that is just to keep the United States in the region, to stay here and keep fighting while they're trying to do something with Lebanon. How long does the United States want to stay in the region the way Israel wants them to? Because with Israel, there is no end to these demands on the part of the Israelis. They want the United States to be there forever.

#Chas

Well, I don't know the answer to that. I mean, I think it's very clear that American public opinion is, for the most part, no longer supportive of Israel. And therefore, Israel has put itself in the same position as the two Christian Crusader kingdoms in Palestine 800 years ago. That is to say, it risks losing the external support which is essential for its survival. I mean, the arrogance of the Israelis knows no bounds. And yes, I'm sure the defense minister, Mr. Katz, is eager to continue to murder people, not just in Lebanon but in Iran.

And of course, we know that what is happening in southern Lebanon, which is about one-fifth of Lebanon, is occupied by Israel. They are carrying out the same program they carried out in Gaza—destroying all the dwellings, the infrastructure, trying to evict the people, get rid of the people who live there, make it impossible for them to return. And we know that, as you said, Hezbollah, not the

Lebanese government—the Lebanese government is in a phony ceasefire with Israel. Hezbollah is not, and they are defending Lebanon and the Lebanese inhabitants of southern Lebanon. So, you know, this ceasefire is a charade. It's not anything serious.

#Nima

We, looking at the GCC countries today, we know that the blockade, as you've mentioned, the Iranian blockade, is influencing GCC countries because Iran is creating some difficulties—for example, for the UAE, for some tankers getting to the UAE. And the UAE, not only on this front, on the other hand, they're running short of, and they're talking about getting closer to China. How do you see China's role and how China sees the situation with the GCC countries?

#Chas

Well, I think the Chinese calculate that the United States has lost its position of influence and dominant role in the Persian Gulf region as a result of this war, and beyond that, is losing its global position. I mentioned the dissolution of NATO with the effort to suspend Spanish participation, which I think is going to unite other Europeans against the United States, much as the Greenland issue did. And the Chinese, I think, calculate that when the war is over—and all wars do end sooner or later—they will have a much stronger position of influence in the Gulf. And I think it's significant that Mohammed bin Salman apparently just called Xi Jinping. I don't know whether he called him to warn him about the prospect of another American attack on Iran.

That could account for why the Chinese have ordered their citizens to leave Iran. But it's clear that China has emerged very much as the beneficiary of this war. Its reputation as a peacemaker, as a conciliator, has been greatly enhanced. It has not been hurt that badly economically, although if, as we expect, the blockade of the Gulf is going to tip the world into a recession, then Chinese markets will dry up and Chinese businesses will suffer accordingly. But the war has driven Russia and China closer together, and Russia has emerged as a key strategic partner of Iran during this fight. But the Gulf countries, the Gulf Arab countries, have had nowhere to go because, to the extent that they depend exclusively on military means of defense, not diplomatic, the only protector available is the United States.

My guess is that they are now going to turn to diplomacy, which means they will stifle their anger—their very understandable anger at what Iran has done to them—and they will make their peace with Iran. And to do that, they're going to have to deal with the question of whether they retain or disperse, get rid of, the American bases on their territory. But I think from their point of view, they've had a convincing demonstration that the United States not only is unable to defend them, but its presence on their territory guarantees attack by Iran. They've also had a demonstration that the United States doesn't care about them; it only cares about Israel. So I think this is a fundamental break in the American presence in the region in the making. A little hard to see while the fighting is still going on, but I think it will become very apparent once the fighting ends.

#Nima

Ambassador, just breaking news from Reuters. They reported that the Iranian foreign minister is heading to Islamabad. It seems that he's with a delegation, as mentioned by Reuters, and they're going to have some sort of talks in Islamabad. I don't know what that is; it just came out.

#Chas

Who knows? I mean, Iran has never been unwilling to talk. What it's unwilling to do is sit there and receive another ultimatum. If the United States really is willing to negotiate with Iran, then there are things that can be agreed on. And by the way, you know, Iran just took a very interesting step with regard to its own blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, and that is it offered an exemption to Russia. So the Russians won't have to pay the fee.

#Nima

I heard that about Spain as well.

#Chas

Oh, I'm sure. And I mean, Iran is playing this card very skillfully. But it's also illustrating that it is flexible. You know, I mean, I go back to the thought that, you know, after this war is over, Iranian sovereignty, or some measure of Iranian control of the Strait of Hormuz, is going to have to be recognized. And in return, Iran is going to have to agree to some rules for how it exercises its control, much as the Turks have agreed to accept rules with regard to the Dardanelles. So if there is a discussion in Islamabad, that's good.

And we hope, we must hope, that it is not once again a cover for a surprise attack by Israel and the United States. And there are very good reasons that Iran doesn't trust the United States. Not only did we tear up the JCPOA, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the nuclear deal of 2015, but we have twice used negotiation as cover for a surprise attack. So if there are talks in Islamabad, I earnestly hope that someone other than Witkoff and Kushner is representing the United States, because they have no credibility at all with Iran. And it's not clear that they serve American rather than Israeli interests.

#Nima

When it comes to the talks, Ambassador, basically looking at the JCPOA and the current situation in Iran, I don't see that they're going to get anything better than the JCPOA. It's going to be something like that.

#Chas

No, in fact, my own strong sense is that this war launched by Israel and the United States has almost certainly created a consensus in Tehran that Iran must build a nuclear weapon. So if that's the case, then Iran will follow the Israeli example and do this in a clandestine fashion. It may, in fact, have already done that. We don't know what happened to the 60% enriched uranium hexafluoride, whether it has been further enriched to the 90–92% level, and whether it has been turned into metal or not. We do not know. So Iran may actually now have a nuclear weapon.

And in that case, we're talking about a situation like South Africa, where you actually have a nuclear weapon. You have to negotiate that away. That will not be easy. Iran is not going to give up enrichment or its ability to build a nuclear weapon for nothing. And Iran has been quite clear that it wants a region-wide peace. That is why the situation in Lebanon is so relevant. We're going to have to deal with that reality because Iran, to use Donald Trump's phrase, has the cards. Now, the Strait of Hormuz is vital to the global economy, and blockading the blockade is counterproductive, not productive.

#Nima

We've seen the envoy from South Korea go to Iran and talk with the Iranians. And it seems that the Europeans somehow are trying to do the same.

#Chas

Nobody has any choice. If they want to preserve their prosperity, they need to deal with Iran on a global level. I think there's been an argument made that Iran is now a global power. I don't think it is. But if you define a world power as one whose interests have to be addressed everywhere in the world, Iran has achieved that in the energy sector. That is not the same as, you know, being a military superpower or political superpower or whatever. But Iran has the cards. And yes, I saw the South Korean envoy received in Tehran — a video of it. This is going to happen. And Spain, as you mentioned before, has established its embassy in Tehran. Everybody's going to have to make peace with Iran in their own interests, including the United States. And the sooner that Donald Trump recognizes that he did not win this war and that he's going to have to deal with the consequences of losing it, the better off we will all be.

#Nima

I talked with Paul Craig Roberts. The point that his ambassador is bringing up is that the nuclear enrichment of Iran under the NPT is guaranteed. His argument is this: why does Iran need to negotiate on nuclear enrichment? Why don't they bring up the big picture about Israel, the Greater Israel? What does that mean for the region? What does that mean for Iran, Turkey? This should be the main objective of negotiations with the United States. Your understanding of that?

#Chas

Well, he's absolutely correct. The Non-Proliferation Treaty gives Iran a right to enrichment. There's no doubt about that. It gives Iran the right to control the nuclear fuel cycle under appropriate safeguards, with the IAEA as the administrator of those safeguards. Israel never signed the NPT. It is in violation of it. The NPT is international law, and Israel has disrespected it. And the fundamental issue in the Middle East, in the West Asian region with regard to nuclear issues, is not Iran. The issue is Israel. Israel has an unknown number, but some people estimate nearly 100 nuclear weapons, nuclear bombs.

It has developed the delivery mechanisms for these, both from the air and on missiles, and apparently from submarines, which evolved from Germany. And this is enormously destabilizing. I find it absolutely amazing that despite Israel's possession of nuclear weapons, other countries in the region have been willing to respect the NPT, including Iran, until now. But I think what just happened on February 28, and subsequently, is a very, very convincing case for Iran building its own nuclear deterrent, as long as Israel has one. So, you know, the issue really ought to be, as Mr. Roberts says, what about the Israeli nuclear issue?

#Nima

So the other point that he's mentioned is the Israeli, the Greater Israel, the concept of Greater Israel. And how is that going to be perceived by the countries in the region? Because after all, looking at the main problem with this sort of endless wars in the Middle East, it's the Israeli policy of expanding their territory into southern Lebanon, the southern part of Syria, Gaza, and the West Bank. This is the basic problem for the region, that the United States is ready to fight, I think, forever for Israel.

#Chas

Well, I mean, that's, of course, exactly what the Omani foreign minister said. The source of instability in the region is not Iran. It is Israel. Iran is not trying to expand its territory. Iran wants to be free from foreign threats. Iran therefore has relationships with different resistance movements that complicate the threat from Israel. But Iran is not expanding. Israel is a state with no borders, no agreed border, no agreed frontiers. It does not respect the frontiers it has with its neighbors. And it's showing that in Lebanon, where it's basically engaged in annexing everything south of the Litani River. It's showing it in Syria, where there are settlers from Israel trying to create settlements in occupied areas in Syria.

And sooner or later they will succeed because they have the support of the Israeli cabinet, even if the Israeli military, for the time being, is not permitting them to establish settlements. So, yeah, I mean, I'll make another point here, and that is a very fundamental one. You hear accusations, which are Hasbara, their propaganda from Israel that has been accepted in the West, that, quote, Iran is

the world's greatest supporter of terrorism. Nonsense. Israel is the greatest perpetrator of terrorism. It rules through terror in the area it controls. It terrorizes its neighbors. It explicitly uses—if terrorism is the use of force against civilians for political purposes of intimidation—Israel does this every day and has done it for 78 years.

So, let's see. Basically, Israel, with the assistance of the Western media and subservient politicians in the West, has turned truth upside down. Others are accused of terrorism while Israel practices it and nobody objects. Others are accused of other atrocities while Israel murders leaders with assassinations, carries out genocide and ethnic cleansing. Others are accused of human rights violations while Israel practices apartheid. So the truth has been turned upside down, black into white. And I think, unfortunately for the Israelis, their behavior has become so egregious that this inversion of truth is now disappearing. People are seeing through it. And, you know, you hear thoughtful Israelis sort of asking the fundamental question, why does everybody hate us?

And the answer that they've provided in the past: well, everyone is anti-Semitic. But Israel has managed to take anti-Semitism, which was a European disease, not very much present in the Islamic world or elsewhere—absent elsewhere—and they've globalized it. I mean, the whole world now is anti-Semitic if you define anti-Semitism as being against Israel and distrustful of Israel, and distrustful, therefore, of people who claim—and the Israelis claim—to be the Jewish state. A lot of Jews don't accept that, and with good reason. They don't want to be part of a state that behaves like Israel does. Others do. But Israel has done something impossible: it's taken the European disease of anti-Semitism and contaminated the entire world with it. Just totally counterproductive.

#Nima

Ambassador, the Israeli government has received from Democrats and Republicans, with the Biden administration and the Trump administration, I think the maximum support that they have received for many, many years from these two administrations. The Biden administration, the destruction, the total destruction of Gaza, what has happened in Syria, and then Donald Trump attacking Iran and giving everything Netanyahu is asking for. Is that the peak of what they could have achieved? And is it going to collapse, in your opinion, as time goes by?

#Chas

I don't think it can be sustained for the reasons we've mentioned. Israel has fouled its own nest. It has turned the entire world against it. And that world now includes a majority in the United States, which has been basically Israel's bulwark against two things. First, political protection—vetoes in the United Nations Security Council and immunity from criticism in the Western media. And second, the so-called qualitative edge that Israel enjoys militarily and the backing of the United States, regardless of what Israel does—unconditional backing.

#Nima

These are both gone now.

#Chas

These are both gone. Even Donald Trump, in the difficult position he's in with regard to Israel, apparently was able to tell Benjamin Netanyahu, you can't continue in Lebanon the way you were. Of course, I don't think Netanyahu in the end will comply with Trump, but Trump at least has been put in a position where he had to rein in Israel. I don't think he's been successful, but he's tried. So can this be sustained? No, it can't. I mean, as you say, this is probably the peak, and we're going downhill from here in terms of U.S. relations with Israel.

#Nima

Do you see something substantial in Israel changing if Netanyahu is removed from power?

#Chas

No, not really. I mean, I think the key question is, again, one that we don't know the answer to, and that is how much damage has Israel suffered from its exchanges of missile barrages, missile bombing with Iran? And what is the effect on Israelis of this? We know a lot of Israelis have emigrated. We don't know how many. We don't know whether the basis for an overturning of Israel's current fanatic fascist government has been laid or not. It's entirely possible that Netanyahu would be followed by someone worse. I mean, it's hard to imagine that, but the cabinet is full of people who are worse.

And maybe that's the future. In which case, I think a lot of Israelis will pack up and leave because they don't want to live under a fanatic religious regime. And I think, you know, here there's an analogy with Iran, perhaps. You know, maybe a lot of Iranians don't want to live under a religious dictatorship either, a theocracy. But Iran is a country with a deep history and a huge expanse of territory. Israel is not. Israel is a small country, recently reestablished, or I should say established, because there never was anything quite like this Israel in the past. So will people hang on to that country?

Will the same dynamic that works in Iran, you know, that they don't like the government, the regime, but they love their country, they love their culture, they have an identity that they wish to preserve, you know, will that take hold in Israel? Or will traditional Judaism, which was, you know, quite comfortable being a religious community in various countries and partaking in the culture of those countries—I mean, look at the Iranian Jewish community, which just had their synagogue blown up by Israel—it's quite possible. Jews have shown over the years that they can continue to exist as Jews in the midst of populations that are not Jewish. So the whole premise of the Israeli experiment with a Zionist state is dubious, in my view.

#Nima

Sanyam Bhutani: Thank you so much, Ambassador, for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always.

#Chas

Ambassador: Right. Well, keep up the good work, Nima. And let's hope there is not a resumption of the fighting on a massive scale.

#Nima

Sanyam Bhutani: Yeah, exactly. Thank you.