

# Col. Jacques Baud: US & Iran: Why Escalation Fails

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## #Nima

What Benjamin Netanyahu said during his interview on 60 Minutes, which came out yesterday. He was asked, is the war with Iran over? And if it isn't, who will decide when it is? He said, I think it accomplished a great deal, but it's not over because there is still nuclear material and enriched uranium that has to be taken out of Iran. There are still enrichment sites that need to be dismantled. And there are still proxies that Iran supports, ballistic missiles they still want to produce. You know, looking at the way he's picturing this situation right now, he said that it accomplished a lot. What did it accomplish so far?

Because I don't see the uranium. They're going to get the uranium. Or when it comes to the nuclear program, we're on the axis of resistance. This war started because it's all about disarming Hamas and Hezbollah. That's not happening anymore. And Iran today is different from what it was before this war started. I don't know the assessment on the part of the Israelis, but I don't see Israel or the United States gaining anything through this war against Iran. Your understanding, and the way that Netanyahu is trying to say, on one side it accomplished a lot. On the other hand, it brings out all those main, you know, sort of rhetoric they had before this war started.

## #Jacques

Well, first of all, we have to remember that this is the fourth attack by Israel against Iran in the last two years. And that means that even in this case, we have a real war happening between the US, Israel, and Iran. Meaning that the only accomplishment I can see from this war is to convince the Iranians that they need a powerful deterrent. That's what they have done. And because so far, and I would say even before last year, there was a sense that things could be solved through negotiation, through diplomacy, and through good relations. In particular, the JCPOA was an example of that. And the JCPOA, in fact, was very successful. It reached its objectives.

The fact that Donald Trump went out of the treaty, in fact, made the treaty invalid to some extent. And in the current situation, we have exactly that, because the Israelis and the Americans failed to follow the path of diplomacy. I remind you that early in January this year, Israel had asked to have a

non-aggression pact with Iran, and that was at the request of Israel, and there were negotiations under the auspices of Russia. Later in February, you had another set of negotiations between the US and Iran regarding the issue of the nuclear issue. So we had two negotiations proceeding as the Israelis and the Americans started their war against Iran at the end of February, meaning that those two countries, Israel and the US, undermined the diplomatic process they started.

So, meaning that for Iranians, solving a problem through diplomacy and through negotiation has become something extremely suspicious. They don't trust the Israelis. I mean, I'm not sure they trusted the Israelis very much before, but this time it was very clear that you cannot trust the Israelis and you cannot trust the Americans either. And remember, that's not the first time. We had, on the three previous instances, the Americans and the Israelis, by the way, attacking in the middle of the negotiation process that was previously regarding Palestine and all that. So, meaning that these Iranians now definitely think that the diplomatic process will not lead to a solution.

And they need to have something that, in fact, they need to coerce both the Israelis and the Americans into a peace process. But they have to coerce that. And besides this, they also need to protect themselves. And there's no other way to protect themselves since diplomacy doesn't work. And even if they have a treaty, by the way, as in the JCPOA, they had a treaty. They had a treaty about enrichment of uranium and things like that. Then you have one party, namely the US, who withdraws from the treaty, and therefore the treaty is not valid anymore. So what's the point of signing a treaty when you know that your partner may exit the treaty at any time?

So the only possible solution to solve this situation is to have a powerful deterrent. Now, we know that Iran has, for years now, in fact, officially since 2003, renounced having nuclear weapons. But of course, since you have this aggressiveness of Israel, because you have absolutely no threat from Iran against Israel whatsoever. I mean, there is not a single example that we can draw in the last 40, 50 years when Iran threatened Israel. But the opposite, in fact, has been constant. We had, remember that between 2003 and 2006, Israel killed almost 600 scientists — not only Iranians, but also Iraqis.

## **#Jacques**

And you had hundreds of Iranian scientists who have been killed, assassinated. And this has been documented in documents that were published about 20 years ago or so. So nothing new there. But that shows that the aggressiveness of Israel has been permanent. We have discussed many times the issue of Hezbollah, which exists only because Israel attacks Lebanon. Hezbollah has no claims over Palestinian territory whatsoever. Whatsoever. It only claims Lebanese territory, and because Israel tried several times to invade Lebanon. That's the reason, the rationale behind the existence of Hezbollah. We have also seen the issue of the Palestinian territory.

We know since the decision of the International Court of Justice—well, we knew before, but with the International Court of Justice ruling of July 2024—we know that the presence of Israel in those

territories, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank, regardless of where in those territories, this presence is illegal. Military or non-military, there should be no Israelis there, period. We know that. So therefore, since they are there, and it's a fact that they are there, it's logical that you have a resistance organization to defend these territories. So we have a constant aggressiveness of Israel all over the Middle East that prompted others to defend.

The problem with what Israel is trying to do with Iran is to remove Iran's right to have, it wants to remove Iran's right to defend itself. That is what Israel wants to do. But in fact, the only country in the Middle East that has consistently attacked its neighbors since the late 40s is Israel. So there is a very strong incentive for Iran to keep a powerful deterrent. Now, as I said before, Iran has renounced the nuclear weapon, but it has its missiles. And in fact, it is the technology developed with the hypersonic missiles and other technologies that creates a deterrent now. That's its deterrence policy. And now, of course, Israel would like Iran to disband its missiles.

They want Iran to remove any kind of deterrent solution. An additional deterrent that is under discussion now is, of course, the use of—though that's mostly valid against the U.S.—the Strait of Hormuz, which used to be free. And before February this year, the traffic through the strait was absolutely free. But today, as we have the situation now, not just with the U.S. and Israel, by the way, but with all the GCC countries that participated in the aggression against Iran. Therefore, for Iran, the limitation of the Strait of Hormuz is not just a matter of national security, pride, or some kind of policy.

It's just a matter of self-preservation because you cannot allow the adversary, your enemy, to use their navies inside the Persian Gulf in order to strike at you. And that's exactly what the U.S. tried to do by forcing their way into the Persian Gulf with a couple of warships just a couple of days ago. So here, the idea that the Strait of Hormuz needs to be managed, as was said by Foreign Minister Arakchi, has to be managed in order to prevent the U.S. from militarizing the Persian Gulf and militarizing the Hormuz Strait. So the Israelis, I mean, the Israelis, the U.S., and the GCC, in fact, created a situation in which Iran is constrained to manage this strait because it has been attacked.

Once those countries make a declaration that they are at peace with Iran, that they have no intention whatsoever to support any further attack against Iran, probably the situation may evolve from that point. But at this stage, I think it just makes sense from the Iranian side to prevent any use, any military use, of the Persian Gulf and of the Strait of Hormuz. By the same token, of course, they can exert pressure on the Western economies, including, of course, the U.S. economy, in order to force the U.S. to engage in some kind of dialogue or at least a treaty that solves the conflict once and for all. This is also something that is very important to understand. The Iranian—and this is a very similar situation to the one we have in Ukraine. I have mentioned that a couple of times.

The Russians and the Iranians don't want a ceasefire. They want a solution. The ceasefire is a temporary measure, and that's not what the Iranians want. They want a permanent solution. That means they need a commitment from the U.S. to stop trying to solve the problem militarily, and to

have a commitment from the U.S. that any further discussion or conflict that may arise in the future will be solved through diplomatic means and not through direct action, as they have done so far. So it's a situation that has been created from scratch by the U.S., because everything we know from the rationale—I mean, the official U.S. rationale—behind the conflict, such as nuclear bombs... we know, and even the U.S. intelligence said, that Iran didn't want to have a bomb. So what's the purpose of this conflict?

We knew they didn't want a bomb. We knew they didn't have any capability or capacity to produce it, at least in the short term. I mean, they probably have the intellectual capacity or capability to make it, but we also know that they had no intention to do it. We also know that, regardless of what we read in the European media, the enrichment has never reached the military-grade type of uranium, and all the enrichment activities of Iran have been within the limits of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Based on that, the best way to achieve strategic success or achieve security, if you look at it from the Israeli point of view, is to have good relations with Iran and not to create an incentive for them to go beyond what they have done so far.

But there was so far absolutely no way. I've never seen any document or declaration whatsoever from the Iranian government that they wanted to go beyond the provisions of the NPT. So the whole purpose of this conflict is just a fantasy. But this is exactly what we hear from Netanyahu on the 7th of October, 2023. It was an attempt to destroy Israel and to, you know, to make a genocide, even, they said. Well, I'm not sure with the handful of fighters of Hamas if you are able to make a genocide, but that's what the Israelis said. So we just create or tell lies, you know, to justify operations, and then they get caught in their lies. That's exactly what we have now.

## **#Nima**

Carl, we've learned that the British government, together with France, is trying to send aircraft carriers to the region to help the United States. And on the other hand, Macron, after Iran's threat to hit French ships if they enter the Strait of Hormuz, said France has never considered deploying warships in the Strait of Hormuz for now. But other reports show that the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle was spotted in the Red Sea on May 8th. So what is happening with Europe, and how far would they go to help the United States with the case of the Strait of Hormuz?

## **#Jacques**

Well, in fact, after the threat issued by the Iranian government, Emmanuel Macron responded as he was in a press conference in Kenya, if I'm not wrong. And he said that the idea of moving the aircraft carrier group—because it's not just the aircraft carrier, but also all the different support ships that go with it—was to pre-position the Charles de Gaulle in the area, I mean, the Indian Ocean area. You never know with Emmanuel Macron. You remember that he said exactly the same thing regarding Ukraine. He wanted to deploy a contingent in Ukraine, but not for fighting, just in case there was an agreement. And it's exactly the same thing here. He just wanted to send the Charles

de Gaulle not to use it, but just to make it ready in case there is an agreement. But this is Emmanuel Macron. Again, we are kind of facing a childish foreign policy actor where you don't even understand what the purpose is.

## **#Nima**

Sorry for interrupting you. Sorry for interrupting you. Because as you've mentioned, it's the same sort of mindset in Ukraine and right now against Iran. If they reach an agreement, why do they need French soldiers to be in Ukraine? Why do they need the French aircraft carrier to be in the region?

## **#Jacques**

That's exactly what I wanted to say. I mean, if there is an agreement, this agreement will be between the U.S. and Iran. What the French are doing in that equation, I don't understand. And as we can see at this stage, I mean, today we had a U.S. proposal and the Iranians have rejected that proposal. Then the Iranians have sent their own proposal, a kind of nine-point plan, if I remember well. In any case, this was also rejected yesterday by the Trump administration. So, as of today, we have two parties that have their own proposals. Each proposal is unacceptable for the other party, and therefore there is no agreement.

But the interesting thing is that regardless of who accepts which proposal, we understand—and that's, I think, I could say a common understanding in the West—that Iran has the upper hand in that issue. And that the U.S., they can do some bravado here and claim whatever they want. The fact of the matter is that they haven't reached any of their objectives. They have suffered a lot of damages, and every day we learn more about the damages they suffered. We don't know much about Israel because they don't even dare to show their damages, because apparently they have been quite severe, although we don't hear of any civilian casualties. And that's very interesting.

In any case, what we see is that Iran has a much cleverer approach to conflict, has in fact reached its objectives, while the U.S. and Israel haven't. Meaning that... Again, I don't have any crystal ball at this stage, but I mean, at this stage, I don't have any crystal ball, period. But we can assume that probably Iran, in some way, will prevail. And if they prevail, I don't see how France could enter the equation here. And that's exactly the same thing between Russia and Ukraine. Russia clearly has the upper hand, and that makes the Europeans and Ukraine very uncomfortable to engage in negotiation because they know they have no cards.

And this, so therefore, how come a French contingent could enter the equation if they want to impose on the Russians some kind of peacekeeping force? And assuming the Iranians and the Russians would accept a peacekeeping force, why would they take a peacekeeping force made up of their enemies or adverse forces? I mean, I can assume that if I were a negotiator in Russia or in Iran, if I would accept a peacekeeping force, this must be a neutral and impartial force. Maybe made

up, I don't know, of the Kenyan Navy or Tanzanian Navy, or maybe Indian Navy, maybe, or things like that. But why would you select to have the French as peacekeepers while they are a party in the conflict? So this is completely delusional.

I mean, a peacekeeping force. And I remind you that I was head of the policy and doctrine of peacekeeping operations in the UN. The characteristic of a peacekeeping force is that it must be neutral and impartial. It cannot be a party to the conflict in any way. So even if there would be an agreement to have a peacekeeping force, there's absolutely no chance that the French would be part of it. But again, this is part of this kind of bravado that you have in France. Macron wants to show that he is an important actor, that he can do something. In fact, he achieves absolutely nothing. I think he would be better inspired if he took care of his own country before taking care of the countries of others.

And that would be probably the safest advice for him. So I don't understand the rationale behind it, but it's exactly the same with Russia and Ukraine. Why would Russia accept a contingent made up of British and French troops? They're already there to fight the Russians. So why would you take them as peacekeepers? It doesn't make any sense. And this is where you see that Western diplomacy is totally failing. These are childish people with absolutely no thinking whatsoever. When you hear the foreign ministers of all these countries, you see that those people have absolutely no intellectual depth. They have no historical depth.

They have absolutely no strategic depth in their thinking. And that's exactly the problem. They react like teenagers in high school. It's just that: you did that, so I do that. This is the kind of thing you can see on social networks, on TikTok and things like this. They just react like teenagers. But diplomacy and peacemaking don't work like this. And I don't see it here, unless Macron wants to show how strong he is, and he may then use force against Iran just to show that he is in charge of something. But when it comes to being part of a peacekeeping force, I don't see it. If it's a rational process, I don't see France playing any role in this issue.