BREAKING: US Strikes Hit Qeshm After Iran DIRTY BOMB Trigger | Elijah Magnier & Stephen Kinzer

War correspondent Elijah Magnier and author & historian Stephen Kinzer discuss the WMD level escalation set into motion between the US and Iran, and why Netanyahu and Trump are in their final push to all-out war. Follow Eijiah Magnier: https://ejmagnier.com/ Stephen Kinzer's new book: https://stephenkinzer.com/ & https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B00455F1NC?ccs_id=e85df06c-54d4-4562-a542-73d5e9635472 SUPPORT THE SHOW BY BECOMING A YOUTUBE MEMBER: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOxLhz6B_elvLflntSEfnzA/join PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: $Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: https://paypal.me/spiritofho Follow me on Telegram: https://t.me/dannyhaiphong #iran #israel #trump

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by Elijah Magnier, a war correspondent, independent journalist, and analyst, to go over the latest developments. Elijah, I wanted to begin with this story on a dirty bomb. Donald Trump has responded to reports that U.S. intelligence has said Washington, D.C., is a target of a potential dirty bomb from Iran. CNN reported this. They said that U.S. intelligence has indicated Iran is developing plans to potentially detonate a dirty bomb in Washington. So some people are wondering: Is this another false flag attempt, Elijah? Because some may remember CNN reporting back in 2002 on an Iraqi dirty bomb that was being hinted at by U.S. intelligence during the whole WMD scare.

There were also airstrikes earlier this morning. Many have attributed them to the United States, killing at least six people, likely military personnel, on Qeshm Island. Earlier this morning as well, Elijah, Iran struck a U.S. military radar system at Sheikh Isa Air Base in Bahrain in retaliation for what have been nearly daily strikes by the United States—what are being called limited strikes. But Elijah, maybe I can get your reaction to begin with on this whole dirty bomb story. Is this another false flag for a bigger operation, given that Israeli intelligence was just in Washington, D.C.? And what do you make of the escalations that have surrounded it today, as we all woke up to reports of strikes between the two countries?

#Elijah Magnier

Thank you for having me. So, throughout the decades, we have become used to this kind of rhetoric. When the Americans or the Israelis want to start a war, they start with an excuse, like a dirty bomb, like weapons of mass destruction, like an attempt to assassinate an ambassador in London or somewhere else. Whatever the reason, it is to prepare the population for whatever comes next. This is what we have seen with all the Israeli invasions and wars and the American wars throughout the decades. The Americans still don't understand the ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and this confirms it. Exploding a nuclear or chemical bomb, or whatever dirty bomb the Americans were referring to, means the mass killing of the civilian population.

This is something only the Americans and the Israelis can do and call collateral damage. In Iran's ideology, they cannot accept the mass killing of civilians, like the Israelis in Gaza, for example, or the Americans in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Libya, and then justify the killing of civilians as collateral damage. This doesn't fit with the ideology of the Islamic Republic. Secondly, what would Iran achieve? What would Iran gain by using an alleged nuclear or dirty bomb in America? It would just ensure that the Americans would not hesitate to use all their might against Iran and bomb the entire country. So it doesn't add up, and it is not Iran's style.

We have seen on several occasions and in many wars how Iran reacts gradually and doesn't go to such an extreme as using a chemical bomb or what they call a dirty bomb. Now, it is true that Iran's leader of the revolution gave instructions that he will no longer accept a situation of no war, no peace. And we understand that this means he is inviting the Iranian military to start escalating against the Americans. But there are plenty of military targets for the Iranians, and we have seen how they have targeted Sheikh Isa in Bahrain. They have targeted these bases and radar installations. They have targets in Jordan, and there are still bases in the Gulf countries.

They don't really need to go to New York and bomb New York or just leave a dirty bomb in some civilian location in New York. So we see the Iranians escalating. We see the Iranians provoking the U. S. Navy by attacking all the oil or gas tankers escorted by the Americans and making sure that these are not only damaged but sunk despite the U.S. escort, to confirm that the Strait of Hormuz is actually not under the control of the Americans anymore. And if the Americans are escorting ships, these ships are not safe. This is where we are today, where Iran is escalating and where the Americans are caught.

They don't know what to do with information about a dirty bomb. It is similar to what came out in The New York Times, saying, well, actually, Iran has more than 500 dams, and these dams are supplying water to the underground missile system or underground missile industry, just to justify and allow the misuse of this information, when actually Iran has a water shortage. Several months ago, the president said the inhabitants of Tehran might need to evacuate because there is no water. So these dams are for civilians. And again, we see that the combination of The New York Times and CNN is far from innocent.

#Danny

Yeah, great points, Elijah. I'm glad you brought up the dams story here because many were also sounding the alarm about a possible pretext for returning to strikes on civilian infrastructure. And indeed, according to The New York Times—this is Gulf News republishing it—there are supposedly plans being drawn up by the U.S. and Israel to strike Iran's economic infrastructure. And so that report would fit quite well with these plans. Elijah, maybe you can help me and the audience understand this. Why is it that the United States right now is operating in this way?

You have, of course, the dirty bomb as a possible justification for some kind of false flag trigger, something to justify a return to major operations. You have the third aircraft carrier in the region now. And you have strikes happening. Some people call them tit for tat. Some say they're, quote-unquote, limited. And you have Iran responding—or some have said that Iran is actually being responded to because of what you mentioned: the strikes on Bahrain as well as the ships. Why is it that the United States finds itself in this position and is operating in this way?

#Elijah Magnier

First, because the U.S. administration is lacking options. Secondly, Donald Trump understands that the American people are against the war because of its consequences for their bills, groceries, oil and gas, and the cost of living. Therefore, he needs something really big, like their lives being in danger, to justify an attack against Iran that is going to increase the damage to the economy worldwide. The economic damage is not limited to America and Iran's sanctioned economy.

It is actually hitting all continents, without any exceptions. This is why Donald Trump needs something very substantial, but it still hasn't fully taken shape in the minds of the population, most probably before the 3rd of January, when the handover between the Republicans and the Democrats will happen in the Senate and in Congress. But he is caught because this is his last option while Benjamin Netanyahu is still in power and a new government has not been formed. And for that, he has a little bit more than one month with Netanyahu, if Gadi Eisenkot, the prime minister who has been asked to form the government, doesn't succeed in forming it in 28 plus 14 days—so, a bit less than a month and a half.

And in this month and a half, Benjamin Netanyahu is itching to attack Iran just to cause damage, knowing that Iran is going to retaliate and damage the Gulf region’s economic and energy infrastructure, to the delight of Israel. Because for the Israelis, if everybody around Israel becomes poor, that would be the ideal scenario. And if the Gulf countries lose their oil and gas depots and then need many years to recover, it means that Israel remains the strongest in the Middle East. This is what Benjamin Netanyahu wants, which is not something that fits with U.S. national security and doesn’t bring any benefit to American citizens or even American administrations, apart from pleasing Israel, actually.

So this chaos in the Middle East is counterproductive for the world's security, and it is not something that anyone, Republican or Democrat, would like to see happening in Iran. So Donald Trump is really caught now. He is faced with Iran being very adamant about its conditions, not willing to move from the seven points: end the war, release all the money, pay compensation, lift the blockade, lift all the sanctions, and end the war in Lebanon with an Israeli withdrawal. And then they can sit and talk about the nuclear dossier. But the Americans only want the blockade to be lifted, and this is not going to happen because that would mean Iran would be left without any leverage against the Americans. And Donald Trump is happy to maintain the status quo. This is why Trump is lacking options.

#Danny

And I'm glad you brought up Israel, Elijah. Haaretz reported yesterday that Netanyahu is blocked in all directions, yet continues pushing for a strike on Iran. And, you know, as this is going on, Elijah, there have been these tit-for-tat strikes. And what I've noticed is that Iran is using drones almost exclusively. It is not coming out with its ballistic missiles right now. And I'm wondering what you make of this, given that these radars they are targeting, which they claim they've hit—CENTCOM, of course, is denying this—are very expensive, actually, and they've been targets since the beginning of this war. Your thoughts on how Iran is responding to U.S. intransigence here, as well as the Netanyahu factor? I know that you have a lot of commentary on what just happened in the Israeli election as well.

#Elijah Magnier

So what's happening is that Iran is using very cheap weapons, like drones, to hit very expensive equipment and to destroy American radars or military installations, or to hijack very expensive American drones. And it doesn't really need to use missiles because it doesn't need to act on a larger scale when missiles are made to cause greater destruction. Here, the Iranians can guide their drones calmly. They can send one or dozens or even hundreds whenever they want, if the target is worth it. So for Iran, I think they are saving the missiles for Israel because they have decided to change their policy by concentrating on one city after another and making sure they destroy one before moving on to the next in case of war. Now, you mentioned Haaretz. Yes, it is true.

Benjamin Netanyahu's only solution for forming a national government is to go to war and make sure that this war lasts as long as possible so he can hold another election. He understands today that Gadi Eisenkot is unwilling to bring him into any national government, even if he accepts the Likud party, which Benjamin Netanyahu leads, into the new government. So Gadi Eisenkot is willing to accept the Likud party into the coalition, but of course not Benjamin Netanyahu, because Netanyahu's condition is that he must be prime minister. And nobody believes him because, in 2020, he was in the national government, and then he changed his mind and did not abide by the agreement. He remained in power for as long as he wanted instead of passing power to whoever had been selected at the time, as agreed before the formation of the government.

Today, a big blow to Netanyahu is coming with a change of speaker. A new speaker will be elected today, along with deputy speakers from the Arab parties, and they will start changing all the laws that Benjamin Netanyahu introduced during his four years in power, when the speaker was from the Likud party, a Netanyahu loyalist who made sure to approve all the laws that fit Netanyahu's wishes. So what we are seeing today is really a big change in Israeli society, where nobody wants Netanyahu in power today except Netanyahu himself.

There is another scandal that has come out: he manipulated information from his office, along with the head of the Shabak—that is, the head of the domestic intelligence service—fabricating information about Arab activists to keep them from running in the elections and supporting the Arab parties. So that is another scandal adding to his corruption cases. Today he had a court hearing, but he left and interrupted the proceedings on the pretext of secret information from the National Security Advisor. So he's trying to find all kinds of excuses, including the war on Iran, to make sure that Gadi Eisenkot doesn't form a government soon.

He already demonized the Arab parties that had 19 seats in the Knesset, and they could have joined Gadi Eisenkot. But because of the ferocious campaign he mounted against them, Gadi Eisenkot cannot bring them into the government, even though they voted to recommend him to the president of Israel as prime minister. And this is why Gadi Eisenkot, with only 48 seats, managed to get the 19 extra votes from the Arab parties to be nominated. Now, the Arab parties are not asking anything of Gadi Eisenkot except to remove Netanyahu. So everybody today agrees on removing Netanyahu, and this is why he is like a wounded animal and can cause damage.

#Danny

Do you think it will succeed? Are we witnessing the end of Netanyahu? And will it make any difference? Because on the one hand, I'm hearing J.D. Vance say things like, "Oh, this war is not going to be a forever war. It'll be over in 2028 or before 2028." But there are also strong indications that Israel is creating conditions that almost remind me of a mixture of June 2025 and the beginning of the 40-Day War—at least in terms of the narrative that's being built around the region. Your thoughts on whether Netanyahu can and will survive what is looking like a much less favorable position for him, as you noted just now?

#Elijah Magnier

Well, now he has 53 votes. There is a possibility that the Haredi, even though they voted with him today in the parliament, in the Knesset, could abandon Benjamin Netanyahu. And that is when he will lose all hope. He is asking for and negotiating immunity, so that at least he will not go to jail over the three corruption cases after a pardon from the president. This is what he is negotiating if there is no hope of him remaining prime minister or holding a ministerial position, because a ministerial position will not protect him from the three corruption cases. Yes, he can still cause

damage, and the biggest damage he can cause is to convince Donald Trump to go to war against Iran before the 3rd of January and the handover between the Republicans and the Democrats. And that also suits Benjamin Netanyahu very well, because that would be before Gadi Eisenkot forms a government.

So that is what we are facing between now and the 3rd of January: a strong possibility of Benjamin Netanyahu taking the initiative and bombing Iran, or trying to provoke the Iranians to bomb Israel so he can remain in power. That's a strong possibility. In terms of remaining in power, he wants new elections, and he wants this government to fail, because new elections mean that he has a possibility of winning a majority. Gadi Eisenkot will not be able to gather the 48 seats, and the Arabs, in Netanyahu's view, will not reach 19 seats.

So this is where we are, with Donald Trump and J.D. Vance saying the deal will be before 2028. He is dreaming, because the Iranians will not give him any goodbye gift before he leaves office. On the contrary, he is the one responsible for the killing of thousands of Iranians, and the Iranians will not compensate him for that or give him any concessions unless he declares that he accepts all the conditions and implements them before Iran does anything. But this is not going to happen. Therefore, I don't see a solution happening before 2028. I don't see a solution with Donald Trump in power. And I don't think Benjamin Netanyahu will have the possibility of starting a war after the 3rd of January.

#Danny

Well, when it comes to Israel, Elijah, does it have the capacity to do what Israeli media is now raving about: taking the initiative under Netanyahu’s direction to strike Iran in order to get U.S. support for another strike, reminiscent of perhaps the 12-day war, but maybe on a different scale and in a different form, given that so much has changed in the region, both militarily and otherwise? Your thoughts on this? Does Israel have the capacity to do this? Does Netanyahu have the capacity to do this?

#Elijah Magnier

Well, we don't need to speculate or analyze much. We've seen Netanyahu in 2025, when he started the 12-day war in June. And we heard Donald Trump telling us that Netanyahu begged him after five to six days to stop the war. Iran was taken by surprise and responded to Israel after 18 hours. In the February 2026 war, Iran responded after 20 to 30 minutes. Secondly, Iran has learned which kinds of missiles to manufacture to hurt Israel the most. So Iran is much better prepared for all possible scenarios and knows how to inflict serious damage on Israel. Therefore, Benjamin Netanyahu can start a war.

That is absolutely without any doubt, because this is what Israel does under the title of preemptive wars. But can Israel finish the war? Will Donald Trump join the Israelis in the war? That is really

questionable because, first, Israel will scream, and Iran will make sure that the destruction in Israel is great. Secondly, I don't think Donald Trump would join Israel, even if he has committed the biggest mistake of his political career—which is not very long, because he's really not a politician—by listening to Benjamin Netanyahu and going to war on the false assumption that the consequences would all be in Donald Trump's favor, so he could claim that the spoils go to the victor.

And we have seen that 14 U.S. bases have been destroyed. We have seen, for the first time, the image of the U.S. empire destroyed—really destroyed by Iranian missiles—and that the U.S. is not a partner that the Gulf countries can rely on, particularly when the Americans fail to defend themselves and their allies. We even heard the U.S. presidential envoy, Thomas Barrack, saying, "We are not in the Middle East to defend the Middle Eastern countries. They have to rely on themselves."

#Danny

Good point, Elijah. Yesterday, The Atlantic reported—and CBS did a 60 Minutes segment on this—that the Pentagon was actually ignoring warnings. Donald Trump completely rebuked that report. Then, once the war started, the strikes immediately ended up killing U.S. service members. So this has had an immense impact, Elijah. And in the last several minutes that we have here before we bring on our next guest, I wanted to ask you what this all means regionally, because we have a lot of different arenas right now. Israel is threatening Lebanon with even further intervention and escalation if the Iran war restarts in a bigger way. Yemen, of course, is making big headway against Saudi Arabia, expanding its territorial control by taking areas near Bab al-Mandeb and even farther away from Saudi-backed forces. So, your thoughts on where things stand regionally, given all that we have discussed in terms of where the Iran conflict—that focal conflict—sits right now?

#Elijah Magnier

Well, there are two important fronts. One, the most important, is Yemen, where Ansarullah are inflicting serious defeats on the pro-Saudi forces along the coast between Bab al-Mandeb and Aden. Ansarullah's forces are coming down from the mountains into the province of Lahij after finishing operations in Taiz, without taking the city but surrounding it under an agreement with the tribe. We have another front also in Marib, in the northeast, where, again, Ansarullah are advancing. So, since the Saudis announced that they would advance and occupy Sana'a, we have seen the pro-Saudi forces losing thousands of square kilometers in the south and in the east.

And I think Ansarullah are slowly advancing towards Aden to control it and make sure that the Saudis will no longer have a foothold in the country. It's going to take time, but the advance is quite rapid. That is the most important front. Another front is Iraq, where we have an ultimatum this Friday to the Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah from Prime Minister Ali Zaidi, who is saying that he's going to

send counterterrorism forces and the federal police to take control of Jurf al-Nasr, south of Baghdad. He is using oil smuggling as an excuse, but in reality, he wants to disarm the Iraqi militia. But this is not going to happen. He can control the oil. He can put an end to the smuggling.

He can send the Popular Mobilization Forces because they have a good relationship with all the Iraqi militia groups. But he cannot disarm the Iraqi groups because disarming them is actually linked to the unity of the theaters of war in Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, and Iraq. Therefore, despite his enthusiasm to respond to what Donald Trump asked him to do, disarming all the militias is not going to happen. These militias will not give up their weapons unless Iraq becomes a sovereign country in control of its skies, where the Americans and the Israelis cannot violate Iraqi airspace, where Turkey leaves Kurdistan, and where the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan end their relationship with Mossad. Next.

#Danny

Elijah, it was a great show with you today. I really appreciate you coming on. I want to make sure everybody knows that your website, ElijahMagnier.com, is in the video description below. So everyone should find that link there. I appreciate your time. Any final words before you head out of here?

#Elijah Magnier

Well, it was my pleasure, Danny. Thank you very much for having me.

#Danny

Of course, yes. I will definitely be in touch with you soon. Take good care, and I look forward to the next one.

#Elijah Magnier

And you too.

#Danny

All right, everybody, I have with me for the first time author, historian, former New York Times correspondent, and author of the new book, Boiling Point, all about the Ukraine conflict and how America brought war to Ukraine. Stephen Kinzer, thank you so much for joining me today. I appreciate you coming on. Good to be here. Great. So I've been following your work for quite some time, actually. And, you know, I see you as one of the preeminent analysts and journalists on U.S. interventionism. And you talk about this in your book. This is a focal point of your latest book on Ukraine. But I wanted to ask you, because you wrote All the Shah's Men and you've talked a lot about Iran: What was it like writing this book on Ukraine, on this long history of U.S. interventionism

in Ukraine, and then watching what the United States has done now with regard to Iran and where things stand? What's that been like, and how do you see these two developments relating to each other?

#Stephen Kinzer

Well, my new book, Boiling Point, is not a book about the Ukraine war. In fact, it ends when the war begins. My book is the story of a 75-year American campaign to turn Ukraine into our battering ram against Russia. So I got motivated by hearing the phrase "unprovoked invasion" too many hundreds of times. And I set out to show that although this invasion may be described as aggressive, illegal, immoral—whatever you want to say about it—it was definitely not unprovoked. Now, whether the provocation was great enough to merit an invasion is something any reader can decide for themselves. But I want to make sure that when people make their decisions about Iran or Ukraine, they are looking at what happened before. And I think that's what I've tried to do in my past books and in my book Boiling Point today.

So I've written about U.S. interventions in Iran and Guatemala, and I've written about the ones in Indonesia and the Congo—all over the world. So that's the focus of this book. It's a story of an American intervention. And this is the last great untold spy-versus-spy story of the modern age. So what does it have in common with what I've written about Iran? I think one very important thing is that I'm trying to show that world crises don't simply erupt because some lunatic wakes up in another country and decides to do something crazy. These crises come from somewhere. They have a background. And the same thing happened in Iran. So had the United States not sponsored a coup in 1953 and placed the Shah back on his Peacock Throne, democracy might have thrived and taken hold in Iran.

And that might have become a signal to the whole Middle East. So everything might have been very different. Now we think of the Iranians as hating us and as being our enemies. But if you look back in history, you can understand why that is. I'm trying to do the same thing in Boiling Point about our conflict in Ukraine. This war did not just start on February 24th, 2022. If you look at what happened on that day, you get a clear picture: an armed country rolled across the border and invaded a smaller country. But that picture could be seen as just the culminating frame of a very long movie that took 75 years to play. And if you want to know what's in that movie—how we got to that day—Boiling Point is the place where I presented it.

#Danny

What drove the United States to be so interested in Ukraine, Stephen? Because right now, U.S. officialdom, U.S. elites in Washington, frame it as being all about concern for Ukraine: poor Ukrainians against the big, bad Russian invader, as you described the Russian invasion. But why has

the United States been interested in Ukraine for 75 years, especially given that that point kind of marks when the U.S. became the top superpower, or hegemon, as some people call it? What about Ukraine is so interesting to the United States?

#Stephen Kinzer

Well, first of all, that phrase that you used, "the poor Ukrainians"—that's who we're supposed to be defending. Actually, I can tell you the Ukrainians are not the reason that we are fighting this war. Ukrainians are just roadkill. This is a confrontation between two big powers, the United States and Russia. And the United States doesn't seem to care about the damage that is being done in Ukraine. This is another reason that drove me to write this book. I was a war correspondent, both in Central America and then in the Balkans. I've seen war close up. And it absolutely breaks my heart to think of the tens of thousands of Ukrainian kids who have gone to their deaths and the ravaging of that country.

What we read about what's being blown up in airstrikes is horrific. It's awful. We're looking forward to another winter where Ukrainians are going to be starving and freezing in the dark. And this is all because the United States is not willing to negotiate an end to it. So you ask, where does it come from? If the goal is not to help Ukraine or save Ukrainians—and in fact, it's the opposite, because we're sacrificing Ukrainians—what is the goal? Well, in Boiling Point, I start the story all the way back in the period right after the end of the Second World War. That was the time when we decided that the Soviet Union was going to be our big enemy or our big rival.

And the first covert action chief at the CIA, Frank Wisner, decided, probably quite correctly, that if you wanted to make trouble for the Soviet Union inside the Soviet Union, Ukraine would be the place to do it. So he decided to try to build a subversive network of activists and saboteurs and organizers and fighters inside Ukraine. The problem was we didn't know any of those people because during the war we'd been allied with the Soviet Union, so we didn't know any anti-Soviet people. Who knew them? The Nazis. They were the ones who created this network. So, fortuitously, right after the war ended, a Nazi general, Reinhard Gehlen, turned himself in to the Americans and announced that he had been the head of something called Fremde Heere Ost, which was Hitler's intelligence network for all of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

So Gehlen made a deal with the Americans, which richly served both sides. The Americans agreed that they would not hang Gehlen. In fact, instead, they would hire him. And he was able to bring several dozen of his former Nazi officers with him onto the CIA payroll. In exchange for this, Gehlen provided the CIA with all the microfilm records of anti-Soviet activists in Ukraine and the rest of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, which he'd hidden in a cave in Bavaria. So our operation in Ukraine was built on a foundation that the Nazis originally constructed. The CIA then began looking at Ukrainian activists and nationalists that we could bring to the United States to help promote this project.

And some of the people that we brought in were former Nazis who would have been ineligible for entry into the US under immigration law. In 1949, Allen Dulles, the head of the CIA, persuaded Congress to pass a law giving him the right to bring 100 people a year into the United States who otherwise would be inadmissible under standard immigration procedures, which is a euphemism for Nazis. So who were these people? I'll just give you one example. This guy became something like the CIA's favorite Ukrainian. His name was Mykola Lebed. We brought him to the United States in that first group of 100 in 1949. The CIA made him the head of a publishing company called Prolog, which posed as independent but was actually established and financed by the CIA.

This was an organization that printed all kinds of leaflets, newspapers, and magazines, all aiming to foment Ukrainian nationalism and hatred of Russia. Some of this material was distributed in the diaspora, and some was smuggled into Ukraine. Lebed also became the head of something called the Supreme Ukrainian Resistance Council in Exile, which was a CIA organization aimed at bringing all Ukrainians in the United States together in this struggle. So who was Mykola Lebed? This guy had been an active participant in the Holocaust. In 1943, forces under his command, directed by the Gestapo, carried out a mass murder campaign in Poland in which tens of thousands of Jews and Poles were slaughtered.

The fact that he and others of his ilk are now being honored in Ukraine has also caused tremendous upset in Poland. I just read that Lech Wałęsa said he's ripped the Ukrainian ribbon off his jacket because these people who slaughtered so many Poles are now being honored as heroes. So that shows you that this project began with a feeling that fighting Soviet power was so important that we were willing to take anybody onto our side who was willing to join in that fight, and Ukrainian Nazis were prominent in that process. So when you read today about the influence of crypto-Nazi or neo-Nazi groups in Ukraine, that didn't come from nowhere. That's the beginning of the entire American project that goes all the way back to the end of World War II.

#Danny

And given that history, it would be understandable that modern Russia—and, I guess, the Soviets before them—would see this as a major threat as it was beginning and building, given that 27 million people died in the Soviet Union because of what the Nazis did during World War II. But given what you just said, in both of these wars—the war in Ukraine and the U.S. war against Iran—there is also a narrative about, you know, the people that the U.S. supports being pure.

They're just the people we should be defending. They've done this in Iran, too. Before the war began, there were protests that turned very, very, very violent. In Iran, of course, the CIA has been very active as well in past years. I'm wondering if you see any parallels in how the United States has treated both of these wars, given all this extensive research you've done on Ukraine. Are there any parallels to how the U.S. has behaved as it has escalated in the Middle East?

#Stephen Kinzer

I think one of the real common factors is the idea that war is just another reasonable policy option among so many others. In fact, it might be the preferable policy option because it's the easiest one when you're the United States. So I think in both cases, we have repeatedly overlooked chances for negotiation. We had a real chance to end our crisis with Iran during the Obama period with his nuclear deal. And that was an example of how there are off-ramps to these crises if you want to take them. And I think that shows us that in Iran, there is an answer. There is a solution. We already had it. The only problem is there's no political will to impose that solution.

And I think the same is true in Ukraine. At this moment, I must say, for the first time, I can feel a little sympathy for Zelensky. I have heard Trump say several times recently that Zelensky should have ended this war a long time ago, which is true. He could have. But I'm thinking, if Zelensky is listening to this, he might be thinking, "Wait a minute. I was ready to end this war a couple of weeks after it began. We had negotiations in Istanbul. We were ready to sign. But you, Biden, sent Boris Johnson, the British prime minister, over to Kiev to see me and shake a finger in my face and tell me, 'Do not sign.'" Boris Johnson told Zelensky, "Putin is a war criminal. He should be fought, not negotiated with."

So now Zelensky might be thinking, "Wait a minute, you're yelling at me because I did what you told me to do, which was not to negotiate." So I think in both cases, if there's political will, the outlines of the solution are clear enough. But with Ukraine, I see a difference, and that is the mood in Washington. There really does seem to be very great unhappiness with the war in Iran coming from both sides of the aisle. The Ukraine war is still very popular on Capitol Hill. You can go all the way from Tom Cotton to Bernie Sanders. They all think it's a great idea to keep sending more weapons into Ukraine. I just read this morning that Chris Murphy, the senator from Connecticut, was saying, "It's very simple."

"Our president is in bed with our enemies. It's as simple as that." So it shows you that just seeking to negotiate, just looking for common ground and peace, is enough to get you labeled as a traitor. And I think that's a big difference: there's a political desire in Washington to end the Iran war, partly wrapped up in anti-Trump feeling, but there's no political will in Washington to end the Ukraine war. And it drives me nuts to hear senators saying things like, "This is the best money we've ever spent because we're killing Russians and no Americans are dying." It's another indication of how little we care for the lives of ordinary, real human beings just because they're called Ukrainian.

#Danny

And who wins in these wars? Analysts on this channel and other programs have noted all the setbacks, actually, that the United States has faced both in Iran and in Ukraine, and how that has really made things difficult on many fronts militarily. But at the same time, they go on. And as you said, they go on enthusiastically, particularly in Ukraine. It seems like the war in Iran, because of the economic crisis and blowback, has been less popular during the election period, but there was very

little challenge to it when it first began as well. So, your thoughts on who exactly is winning, then, based on your research? I mean, you've written so many books. You've traveled to so many places. Who exactly wins from these wars if, you know, they continue regardless of these kinds of consequences, which have a very real impact on ordinary people and even on the power of the U.S. around the world as well?

#Stephen Kinzer

So many of these American interventions about which I've written ultimately wind up not only harming the target country but also undermining and weakening the security of the United States. So you're asking, who wins? Well, let me go back to the beginning of the process of pushing the NATO alliance into Russia's face. You all know the story that in 1990 there was an agreement that we would not move NATO any further east. We did that anyway. And I have a quote in Boiling Point from a guy from NATO who's responding to Russia's complaint: "Wait, you promised you wouldn't expand eastward. Now you're expanding eastward. Why?" And the NATO spokesman said, "Well, those were only private comments by individual leaders at those meetings in Berlin."

The alliance itself never took a vote on this, so those private comments don't matter. How did we get going on this project of pushing NATO into Russia's face, even though we had promised, although not with the force of treaties, that we wouldn't do that? Well, it goes back to Bill Clinton. And if you want to point out one individual who's responsible for setting the ball rolling on the way to war in Ukraine, it was definitely Bill Clinton. But if you pull back, maybe another president would have acted the same way. Look at the political context in which Clinton decided to do this. First of all, he was not a scholar of world affairs, to put it mildly. And the idea that 30 years down the road this might cause an explosion with Russia was hardly on his mind.

Clinton went to the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, and there he was approached by the presidents of Czechoslovakia and Poland. They told him, "We want to get into NATO." He went back to the White House and told his national security advisor, "Get going on the project." Why did he do that? Well, as I said, he was not a person who understood geopolitics. He also was not one of those people in Washington who grew up hating Russia. He didn't have any particular feelings about Russia, I don't think, any more than any other American. But he had a couple of very important reasons to push ahead with NATO expansion. Number one, the arms industry. We know this is one of the most powerful and richest lobbies in America. They were salivating at the prospect of NATO expansion because every country that joins NATO has to buy an entirely new arsenal: new airplanes, new tanks, new machine guns, everything.

And it all has to be NATO-compatible, which is a euphemism for bought in the United States. So the arms industry, needless to say, spent millions of dollars lobbying for NATO expansion and would have turned viciously on Clinton if he had tried to stand in their way. Reason number two: Clinton was facing re-election in 1996. His opponent, Bob Dole, was promising to bring every Eastern European country into NATO tomorrow. So Clinton had to think about those Polish-American votes

and Ukrainian-American and Slovak-American and Hungarian-American votes, all in key states like Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois. He would have lost the election if he had stood up and said, "It's the statesmanlike thing to put off NATO expansion because it could cause trouble with Russia."

He was being bombarded with appeals from everybody from Bill Bradley to Pat Moynihan to Sam Nunn not to do this. Even George Kennan, the most famous of all Russia hands, predicted exactly how Russia was going to react if we pushed our military alliance into its face. In that sense, I could say the arms industry benefited. Clinton benefited because he got himself reelected. This was one of the most important things that happened in our lifetime, and we hardly even knew it was happening when it was going on: the pushing of NATO eastward. And I think the other great beneficiary of this war, besides the arms industry, comes directly out of that fact.

It's NATO. It's the idea of the United States being able to say, "We rule. And until we say there can be peace, there won't be any peace." And we do not do negotiations. We do not practice what scholars call strategic empathy: putting yourself in the shoes of the person on the other side. We have decided that Russia has no legitimate security concerns. We do not want to talk to Russia. And that's the reason the war goes on. There are only two options with Russia: either we negotiate with them or we don't. If we don't, we get more war. If we do, people who urge it are dismissed as traitors. So NATO has a new mission for itself. You know, the Warsaw Pact dissolved itself after the end of the Cold War.

NATO could have done the same thing or even transformed itself from a military into a political organization. But that takes away a great bureaucratic momentum and a chance for all those American generals to have such fun jobs in Brussels. Big bureaucracies like NATO always keep on going. So I think if you ask who benefits from the war, it's the arms industry and the American political elite. And maybe you could even call it the American political consciousness, because it makes us feel like we're still on top of the world. And the danger of that, of course, is that in real life we're not anymore, and that's what causes all these conflicts to explode.

#Danny

Well then, based on this, I wanted to ask you about the boiling point on this U.S. road to war with Russia over Ukraine. It does signal what some have called, even in Washington circles, this era of great-power competition. And one thing that I stress on this show is that these wars get bigger and the stakes get higher and higher as the U.S. moves up the escalation ladder with a country like Russia. And we've seen all the consequences that have now been visited upon the U.S. because of its war against Iran. What lessons do your newest book and your writing offer about the U.S.'s current path as the, I guess, waning superpower, as some have called it, as it continues to move forward in this war in Ukraine and, of course, along its overall interventionist path?

#Stephen Kinzer

The security dilemma that we face goes beyond Ukraine, as you point out. And you mentioned the escalation ladder. In this war in Ukraine, Russia will always be able to go higher on the escalation ladder because the Russians consider this to be an absolutely existential war for them. It's about whether their nation will survive or not. It doesn't mean that for us, so we're not willing to go as far as they are. One of the lessons that I think comes out of this is that the United States made a big mistake at the end of the Cold War. And I blame the Europeans as well. This was a moment of tremendous change and tremendous opportunity in Europe. There should have been a big conference at which all the European leaders sat down and tried to figure out, "What's going to be the new security architecture for this continent?"

This is what happened after the Napoleonic Wars. You remember the Congress of Vienna in 1815. All the leaders of Europe were there. They set up a system, and they kept the peace in Europe for 100 years. After World War II, we set up the United Nations and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We had a new system for running the world. Now, when the Cold War ended, we never did that. And I think the reason is very simple. The United States felt like, “We don't need to negotiate with anybody. We'll just dictate what the new security order will be.” That turned out, not surprisingly, to be highly inadequate. We desperately need a new security architecture for Europe. Instead, what we've done is the opposite. We've gone back to the old security architecture, which is a divided Europe.

It's just like it was in the Cold War, except that the dividing line has been pushed a few hundred miles further east. So there's been a great failure of imagination and a great unwillingness to take into account the security interests of all countries. That would include Russia. The United States keeps insisting that Russia has no legitimate security concerns. And as long as we keep saying that, it's hard to see any way that we can finally break out of this security dilemma. So to me, the biggest challenge in the world now, if you're asking me to go in a more cosmic direction, does have to do with the changing balance of power. So the United States is, at least in a relative way, losing power as other countries rise.

Now, the big question I see ahead is: Is the United States ready to accept this inevitable trend? Are we willing to live in a world that we don't completely dominate? Or are we going to lash out against that change because there's just nothing in the American consciousness that allows us even to imagine a world that we don't boss around? Are we going to lash out and start wars every time our authority is challenged, which is exactly what's happening in Iran? So whether the world will be peaceable or less peaceable in the future, I think it depends a great deal on whether the United States is prepared to adjust to a new world. That would include negotiating with and inevitably compromising with countries we consider our adversaries. A great place to start would be Russia.

#Danny

Steven, I want to make sure everybody knows where they can find your book. I put an Amazon link in the video description where everyone can go and purchase it, “Boiling Point: How America

Brought War to Ukraine." I also put your website in the video description below. But do you have any final words before the program ends here?

#Stephen Kinzer

As for where to buy my book, I definitely have a piece of advice. I love doing all my browsing on Amazon and finding out what books I want. Then I walk over to my local independent bookseller and order the books there. We're in a moment where dissenting views on world affairs are systematically excluded from public and media discourse. If you want to break out of that, we need an alternative ecosystem. Independent bookstores are a vital part of that. So I like to think that "Boiling Point" fits in with the ethos of independent bookstores, and I urge people to buy it there.

#Danny

Yeah, I would second that. Steven, I look forward to the next time we get to speak. I'll definitely keep in touch with you. It was a great show today. Everyone should check out your website and your book in the video description below. They can find all the information there. Thanks so much again.

#Stephen Kinzer

It was good to be with you, Danny. Thanks.

#Danny

Yes, take care. All right, everybody. That is today's program. I'm just going to go through some announcements before I head out of here. Tomorrow, I have a later show at 9 p.m. Eastern Time with Ben Norton and KJ Noh. That will be 9 p.m. Eastern Time, November 18th. There's also a chance that I'll do a news report—an analysis of the latest developments—earlier in the day, perhaps toward the beginning of the day, at least Eastern Time. So keep your ears open, your notifications on, and be on the lookout for that. And then Thursday, on the 19th, I have Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson and Larry Johnson, and then Patrick Henningsen on Friday to round out the week. So everybody, hit the like button before you go. This was a great show today.

Hit the like button. That helps boost the show in YouTube's algorithm. Be sure to support Stephen Kinzer's work and his books. They are absolutely critical to understanding the historical context from which these geopolitical developments arise. So do support him. Of course, go check out Elijah Manier's work as well. All of that's in the video description. All the places to support this show are there too, including Patreon, Substack, and much more. I want to thank Ware and Pilgrim Sam as well. I thought I saw Patty in there too. I see a few members. Thanks so much, Serby and Mike. All

of you can become members. That helps support the show. There are so many ways to support the show in the video description below. Do so, and I will see you all tomorrow. Take care, and until next time, bye-bye.