

Col. Jacques Baud: Trump's Last Card Just SHATTERED Israel

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Monday, May 25th, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Col. Jacques Baud, is here with us. Welcome back, Colonel.

#Jacques

Hi, Nima. Thank you very much. Happy to be back.

#Nima

Yeah. Colonel, let me start with the negotiations. I don't know, the messages between Iran and the United States. And here is what, from the Iranian side, we've learned. Because unfortunately, whatever we hear from Donald Trump and his administration, I don't know, we cannot trust, because they're trying to twist things, they're trying to manipulate. But at least we have the Iranian side talking. What they're saying to us is that Iran—the talks, or whatever is happening, the messages they're sending to the United States and the United States sending to Iran—are focused on ending war, not the Strait of Hormuz, not the Iranian nuclear program. And ending war means that the United States has to do something with Israel and with the case of Lebanon. It's not just about Iran and the United States. Are we going to pass the first step to get to the second step and the third step? Is that possible from what we've seen so far?

#Jacques

Well, as you said, this is almost trying to square the circle. And because Trump needs a success in the war he started, and because of his ego, and probably also internal pressure within the U.S. administration—not necessarily the administration, but let's say institutions—because you have people who are not part of the administration, such as Lindsey Graham, for instance, and others who hate Iran. And again, this is not new. We are part of this bipartisan issue regarding Iran, China,

Israel, and things like this. So the U.S. system puts a lot of pressure on Trump. In fact, Trump would have been much better inspired not to start this war, because now he has trapped himself in a situation where he's sitting between two chairs.

On the one hand, those like Lindsey Graham and others who want him to continue the war, who don't even know exactly what they want to achieve, but suddenly want to destroy Iran. That's certainly one thing. And you have the reality of the market. And the reality of the market is twofold. You have first the international market that is affected by the price of oil. And that's not just because of the threat of bombers. It's also because of all the oil infrastructure that you may have in the GCC countries that are under the threat of being destroyed if the war resumes. Remember that Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, and others were part of the aggressors.

And therefore, as long as we have a state of war between Iran and those countries, all these oil facilities might be destroyed. And I just mentioned here the oil facilities, but you may have other facilities that may also affect international trade. I mean, even the ports, for instance, the seaports that may be destroyed and may prevent the export of other products and oil, such as sulfur, urea, and others for fertilizer and things like this, aluminum and others. So the fact that the U.S. started this war endangered not simply the region, but also international trade in very specific and very strategic material.

And second, you have the US economy, because, I mean, that's also collateral damage from the international economy, because the price of oil will affect the US in a lot of different ways. I mean, energy is basically embedded in any kind of product you buy, whether you buy a cell phone, a car, or even chocolate. Energy goes into this price because of transportation, also based on manufacture and all that. Meaning that Trump is now sitting between those two chairs—war or peace, if you want—which is countered by a lot of people within the US, and war with the danger of having an even worsening economy.

And there is a very important factor as well. That is his ego. He started a war, and he's a winner. He's the one who wins everything. And suddenly now he realizes that he's back to square one. He has not gained anything. He has antagonized his most precious allies in the Middle East. He has led Israel to destruction. He has led Israel to international and worldwide despise, because this attack, this unprovoked, unjustified attack against Iran, has added to all the war crimes that Israel has done so far. And all that, if you draw the line, you will see that we are largely below zero in terms of results.

And the only thing he can, he could save or salvage from an agreement, is a good deal. But what is a good deal for him? It cannot be. And so this is a situation where whatever he does, he will be in a bad position. He just has to choose between the bad and the worst positions. That's what it is. So we are in this situation, and that's the reason why it will be so difficult to craft an agreement.

Because on the other hand, Iran, as we have said many times, is fighting for an existential threat. Iran understands that if the conditions change, are not set definitively, that means that if we don't settle this conflict once and for all today, this will resume.

And even if, I would even dare to say that even if Iran settled this conflict with the US, my view is that there is absolutely no guarantee that Israel will not try to resume it at a later stage. Meaning that Iran needs to have even more than it would have required or requested before, because it needs guarantees, not simply a signature, but also guarantees and safeguards so that it doesn't restart. That means a commitment by Israel, and that will be very hard to get because Israel has never been bound by any commitment they made in the past, starting in 1948, because in 1947 Israel didn't exist.

#Jacques

They never come, let's say, implement or... the word is missing now. They never managed to abide by their own commitments. And that's the problem. And Iran knows that, and every people in the region, including Lebanon. And that's the reason also why Iran wants to include Lebanon in that, because obviously Israel is a regional problem as such. And so that's where we are. So I don't expect to have a resolution. In addition, we also have to say, Iran—we have said that many times—time works for Iran. They are not under pressure. Of course, if you have a resumption of strikes against Iran, they will certainly suffer. But since the fight is existential, they are ready to go into this risk, because what is at stake is much higher than even the number of human lives. That's the problem. And Trump has put Iran in this situation. Now, I don't see any other alternative for the US than just to accept that it has been defeated and to accept the conditions of Iran, because otherwise we'll continue this crisis.

#Nima

Colonel, the complexity of the issue between Israel and Lebanon is part of this problem. And we've seen various footage coming out of Lebanon using drones and hitting targets in the southern part of Lebanon and Israel. And the new, you know, footage shows that they're using thermal cameras to hit Israeli soldiers. This is new for Israel, in my opinion. We haven't seen this sort of footage before. This shows how the reality of the war is changing between Israel and Lebanon.

#Jacques

Well, not only there, because, I mean, all that, in fact, derives from the evolution or development of technologies regarding drone technology. And you have miniaturized optical systems and things like this. We have to say the conflict in Ukraine has, in fact, provided a kind of test ground for such technology, and Hezbollah is profiting from that. In addition to that, you know, thermal technology used to be extremely expensive 40 years ago or even 20 years ago. Today, it's extremely affordable. You find it in your cell phone almost. So there is no wonder that you have this technology arriving on

the battlefield with Hezbollah today. The thing is that, in fact, the situation in Lebanon is not complex. We probably have difficulty getting the right overview of the battlefield because the Israelis don't communicate much.

And Hezbollah can only communicate what it can in order not to endanger its own situation. So we have only a partial view of the battlefield. But by and large, the Israelis are experiencing now in Lebanon exactly what they experienced in 2006 — with other means, with other weapons — but they are countering exactly the same fierce resistance that they encountered in 2006. The thing is that Hezbollah is, again, a resistance organization. Hezbollah doesn't fight in Israel. I mean, they attack with missiles or artillery. They attack the logistics of Israel or some command post. But you don't have Hezbollah fighters fighting on the territory of Israel because, again, there is no claim over Israeli territory. Hezbollah has only claims over Lebanese territory, and therefore they fight on their own territory.

That's where we have a lot of fallacies circulating about this conflict. There's absolutely no reason, no justification, no motive for Israel to be in Lebanon. Zero. Zilch. And that's the point. And the Lebanese know that. They have experienced several invasions or attempts of invasion in the last 40 years. And therefore, nowadays, they understand how the Israelis work and all that. Now, the thing is that Israel is, if you want, to invade a country — and that, by the way, would be exactly the same problem if the U.S. would like to have a land operation in Iran, by the way. That just shows the thing. You know, it's easy to go and bomb people with aircraft, or even missiles — very easy. I mean, it has its own difficulties, but in essence, it's easy to claim kind of a success when you bomb people from far away.

#Nima

Yeah, specifically when the country doesn't have an air defense system. Exactly.

#Jacques

Absolutely. Absolutely. It becomes a totally different story when you start to send soldiers, infantry, because if you want to take a territory, you have to occupy it. Of course, you can raze the country, the villages and all that, from far away. And the Israelis know how to do that. But eventually, if they want to take the territory, they have to take it and hold it. And that's where the problem comes, because the Hezbollah fighters are seasoned fighters. They defend their country. They know why they fight. Well, I'm not sure the Israelis know why they fight. Probably some are indoctrinated enough, but most of them understand that they are not in their own country, while Hezbollah fights for its own country.

And that makes a huge difference. And we see that. And as we had in Gaza, by the way, exactly the same thing. Yes, the Israelis had a technical and technological superiority, but they did not have the determination. I mean, the general staff had the determination, but the fighters themselves, we saw

that, well, it's easy to kill a child, a kid. This is easy. That they can do. But to confront a real fighter, that's where the problem starts. And that's exactly what the Israelis are experiencing in South Lebanon. And so for that reason, and by the way, we are also in a case because, of course, when you talk about Gaza, although the Gaza case is extremely clear from an international law point of view, it's very clear.

Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank are Palestinian territory. It's a state that is recognized by the UN. So it's not a fantasy state. It is a state. So when the Israelis invade Gaza, they invade a foreign country. Period. Clear. And this country has the right to defend itself. And even if the Israelis were surrounding Gaza, trying to keep Gaza as a huge concentration camp, because that's in effect what it was, this is considered an occupation, even if you had no physical presence of Israeli soldiers. And that's also defined by international law, meaning that all the operations of Israel within Gaza are against international law. But some people may still argue that Gaza is not part of Palestine or whatever.

You may have this. Well, in Lebanon, this discussion doesn't exist because Lebanon is a country, a clear country for everybody. Everybody recognizes Lebanon as a country. And the presence of Israeli soldiers in Lebanon is, regardless of how you consider the case, illegal. Period. Therefore, not only do the Israelis encounter a very strong, very fierce defense from Hezbollah, but at the same time—and not but, but and—the international community recognizes, although it's also very interesting to see that there is very little reaction, especially from Europe, to the invasion of Lebanon by Israel. But in reality, this is exactly the same case as Israel attacking Iran. It's the same thing, basically.

The problem, again, we are back to this situation that nobody dares to criticize or even condemn Israel for what it does. And the reality is that you have governments in Europe—the French government notably, the US government definitely, the British government as well, and the government in Germany—who are under influence. Period. These governments are under influence. And that's the reason why they don't dare to use, even to use, international law to condemn or criticize Israel. So that's, again, you know, I'm not saying that Israel should not exist or things like that. But what I have discussed many times with you, especially when it came to the situation in Gaza, as long as Israel doesn't behave according to international law, I mean, that makes this country illegitimate.

You see, this is... We expect a country as—and by the way, we have to remember that Israel was created in 1948, but it entered the United Nations in 1949. And the condition for Israel to enter the UN as a member was that Israel had to commit itself to respect international law. That was a condition for Israeli membership in the UN. To my knowledge, this is the only country where people required that, because at that time, everybody in the UN Security Council, at least at that time, understood that Israel had not, in one year of existence—and even before, if we can say, what happened just before independence—but in one year of existence, Israel had never complied with international law.

Therefore, they imposed on Israel the condition of making an official declaration in which Israel accepts to respect international law in order to be a member of the UN. Why we don't come back to this declaration today is, to me, a mystery. I mean, a half-mystery, because we understand the pressure and the influence Israel has in most Western countries. But in fact, everybody knew that at that time. And so far, Israel has not. I mean, if you see the number of resolutions condemning, I think no country has been more condemned by the United Nations than Israel. There are more than 100 resolutions condemning the actions of Israel. And, you know, it's not condemning Israel as a state as such, because it exists or because there are Jews. It condemns Israel because it behaves badly. This is the behavior that is condemned.

And that is something that Israel has never managed to correct within 80 years of existence. And that, I think, is tragic, especially for all the victims, first of all. But it's also tragic for Israel itself. And that's exactly the reason why we see today, in a recent poll, that Israel is the most hated country in the world. And there is no mystery about that. And I would say even it's logical. It's logical because it doesn't behave—it refuses to behave according to international humanitarian law. It behaves like the worst of the dictatorships we had in the past in Europe. How can you expect from that? Again, I think this is something that Israel should realize. It seems to me extremely important that even Western countries, as you do with old good friends, would advise Israel and say, well, guy, if you want us to support you, you need to behave.

And once you behave properly, then we'll continue to support you. If you don't behave, how can I support you? That's exactly what you would say to a good friend. The question is whether Israel is our real friend or not. This is probably the reason why nobody does this, because nobody considers Israel as a friend. This is probably an explanation. But the fact of the matter is that we should see more influence from the so-called Western civilized world, whatever that means, but in order to bring Israel into—not back, because it has never been in—the path of international law. I think that's a key thing to the survival of Israel. If Israel doesn't understand that, it will not survive. Definitely not.

#Nima

Yeah, the situation, Carl, is that Israel is so desperate for Donald Trump because look at what has happened so far. If Donald Trump leaves the region and lets everything be, you know, in the hands of the governments and the countries in the region, you see Israel has been diminished militarily, geopolitically, in each and every aspect. So he has to do something before leaving the region, which is he's trying to put pressure on GCC countries to normalize the relationship between them and Israel. He wants them to sign the Abraham Accords. They're talking right now about it. Yesterday there was news that Donald Trump is forcing GCC countries to sign the Abraham Accords as part of the deal between the United States and GCC countries for the negotiations between the United States and Iran.

If you want a deal between the United States and Iran, which puts an end to the war, and you can sell your oil, your gas, and everything you have, you have to sign a deal with Israel, normalize. We know that's not going to happen because, at least from Saudi Arabia, they said there has to be a state called Palestine. They said that multiple times, GCC countries. And is there any other way for Donald Trump to leave the region? Because I don't see that happening. That's why he's putting pressure on allies, not on Iran, you know, when it comes to the normalization of the relationship with Israel. What is your understanding of that?

#Jacques

Well, that's what I said before. The key to peace or stabilization in the area is not for other countries to have good relations with Israel. The key is that Israel behaves according to international law. You know, they are taking the problem the reverse way. They think that the problem is because people don't recognize Israel. No, people would recognize Israel if Israel were an honest partner. And you probably don't even need to have an agreement; that would come by itself. If you have a good neighbor, you're happy to share with him. If you are in a good relationship with your neighbors, you don't need to have an agreement with them.

It comes naturally from your position. And if you want to help your neighbor, if he helps you with your car or your garden, whatever, I mean, they will do that naturally. And that's exactly the same thing in the Middle East. The problem is that Israel doesn't behave properly, occupies territories, takes the Golan, takes the Palestinian territory, takes Lebanon. All these territories are illegally occupied. Why would you have an agreement with a neighbor you know doesn't want to behave properly? You're binding yourself with someone who may turn against you in the future, and you have no means to react. So this is absolutely nonsense.

The first thing that the Americans should do, you know, the problem is that during the Cold War, Israel was this kind of Western stronghold in a very, let's say, type of hostile Middle East. That was in the early 70s, 80s. Syria was related to the Soviet Union, Egypt to a certain extent as well, and Libya, Algeria. I mean, the whole Mediterranean was more or less extremely allied, let's put it that way, with the Soviet Union. And you had a standing presence of Soviet warships in the Mediterranean, in Libya, Algeria, and Syria, and all that. I mean, the base of Tartus and all that are the remnants of this Soviet presence at the time, meaning that Israel had a strategic position there because it was kind of an advanced post of the West in the Middle East.

After the Cold War—and that's what the Americans have never managed to understand, or didn't want to understand, and probably also because they are under influence—after the Cold War, with the change of the regimes, I'm not talking about what happened in 2010, 2011, 2012, things like that. I'm talking about what happened in the late 80s and 90s, almost everywhere. Even in Syria, the change from Hafez al-Assad to Bashar al-Assad, the change from Sadat to Mubarak, the change—I mean, almost everywhere you had a change. That, and the Middle East and the Mediterranean Sea

at large—I mean, the southern part—became more, let's say, friendly to the West. And therefore, Israel has lost its strategic situation, if you want. And that's the problem. The Americans have still considered Israel as their main ally.

But in fact, they could have also good allies in—I mean, they have good allies in Egypt, Jordan, and all that. So they could manage to have that. I mean, Israel is no longer that necessary to the U.S., in fact. And the U.S. has never managed to use that situation in order to harmonize the Middle East. They use this antagonism that you had between Israel and its friends. You know, this is a divide et impera, you know, divide and—divide and conquer. In Latin, that means to rule, divide and rule. Exactly. Thank you. And that's what the Americans have tried to do. But I don't think that's the model that could work in the Middle East. You don't need to divide people. They're already divided enough, in fact. And we see that because the Arab countries have always had various difficulties to unite, even against Israel, by the way. So you don't need to divide them more.

#Nima

Because the British Empire did that before.

#Jacques

Oh, yes, yes, I know. I know. But in fact, if you see what happened in the first part of the 20th century, I mean, during the 20th century at large, you could see that the Arabs have never managed to unite their forces, only on very limited occasions and for very limited results. But they are very divided. I mean, this is a problem of culture, of religion, of political systems. I mean, you have many explanations. Also, the economic situation, which may vary strongly from one country to another. So there are many factors that can explain this inability of Arab countries to unite. And even with the GCC, you see, they're not even united. You see, the UAE is just going apart. And you see that the reaction to the war in Iran is also very diverse.

So this division has always been a problem of the Arabs. It's their weakness as well, by the way. But that's a reality. So you don't need to impose Israel. You didn't need to divide people by supporting this kind of illegal behavior of Israel. In fact, they did exactly the opposite. They created some kind of unity against Israel. Israel is probably the only factor that may unite the Arab countries. But again, what makes Israel unite the Arab countries is not because Israel exists, it's because it doesn't behave properly. That's the reason. Would Israel be behaving properly? Would Israel treat the Palestinians properly? Would Israel have applied Resolution 181 of 1947 that gave the opportunity to create a second state?

I mean, had Israel complied with all this international law, there would probably be no problem. All these wars that happened would probably not exist. All of that, and if you study well, because when you listen to Israel, each time you have something against a Jew or against Israel, this comes out of nowhere. The 7th of October comes out of nowhere. There was nothing before that. The history

starts on the 7th of October. And even that always starts there. The reality is different. The reality is that the 7th of October happened after you had 50, more than 50 years, almost 80 years of mistreatment of prisoners, the use of hostages. You know, everybody says, well, but Hamas took 100 people as hostages. Well, okay, or not okay, depending on how you look at it.

But what about the 1,500 hostages that were taken by Israel? Nobody talks about them. But there were thousands of prisoners in Israel, and there were 1,500. I mean, I'm talking about what happened in October 2023. There were 1,500 hostages—children, women, elderly—and all that, taken as hostages to put pressure on certain families or certain individuals and all that. That's, by the way, the rationale behind the 7th of October. But if you discard this part of history, you always have the impression that Israel is cursed because everything happened, the poor guys didn't do anything, and they have all the problems of the world on their head. No, it's not that. They created every single problem.

And that's by misbehaving, by not respecting the rules, by writing new rules that supersede international law. And that was even acknowledged officially, that Israel is not subject to international law because it's a chosen people or whatever. It's not possible. This is not the way the world can function. Therefore, this idea of reviving the Abraham Accords—Abraham Accords must not be the starting point of something. That must be the endpoint of something. First, you should have Israel coming back to its roots. I would say it's not even borders. Israel has no borders, no official border. But let's say Israel should come back to the so-called Green Line, which is the ceasefire line of 1949. These are the tolerated borders, and the only officially tolerated borders. There is no other border accepted for Israel.

So they should come back to that, first of all. Once they do that, then you will see that people will have a lot of goodwill. Again, we are always trying to start to solve the problem from the end. You have to solve the problem from the beginning. You have to address the root causes. We have discussed that many times about Ukraine and the position of the Russians. They always say, well, we have to treat the root causes of the problem. And that's true for every single conflict. It's not just for Ukraine. It's also the case for Israel. Treat the root causes. And probably we have to dig back to 1947, 48 to find those root causes. But there are the root causes. And then the Abraham Accords will be a solution. And that's the problem with the US. They always want to go faster than the music.

And it's not the way to go. But again, we are always in the same situation, especially with Donald Trump. He wants to have quick results. And we are in conflicts that are so protracted that quick results are impossible. This is just the vision of a teenager—well, you just have to do this and just... no, no, no. It has to go deeper than this. It has to go. And that requires also, especially from Israel, that Israel rethink its position in the Middle East. And when I say position, I would say the posture they have in the Middle East. What do they want to achieve? Do they want to be at war for eternity? All these questions have not been asked because they think that by terrorizing others, they will prevail by terrorizing others. But there will be an end to that. And it's a very small country.

#Nima

Karl, shifting the gear a little bit to what has happened in Ukraine, we've seen Russia responding to a Ukrainian attack, a Ukrainian drone attack on civilians in Russia. And Russia responded, they used Russian missiles. And you've mentioned Donald Trump. I think the problem is still the same when it comes to Ukraine because there are no serious negotiations, no serious talks between the two parties. Europeans are not willing to talk that much. The United States and the change we had in the United States—we thought that Donald Trump would change that. As you've mentioned, Donald Trump is not a serious negotiator. That's why the war is somehow, in some ways, escalating if we see what is happening with the case of drones. I would say if these drone attacks continue, we're going to see a lot of, you know, hard or devastating responses from Russia. What is your understanding? What is your assessment of the war between Russia and Ukraine?

#Jacques

Well, before addressing Russia's response, we should probably have a closer look at what the Ukrainians did. I mean, I don't want to go into the details of the attack on Starobilsk, this dormitory. But the thing is that we have seen in recent weeks or months even, in Eastern Europe, this idea of kind of an escalation somehow, at least in the rhetoric. All these attacks, the drone attacks that incidentally were identified through the airspace of Estonia, Latvia, but also attempts from Ukraine to use the Polish and Lithuanian territory to fly their drones in order to bypass the Russian air defense and thus reach St. Petersburg and the northern area of Russia, and therefore also, by the way, using the Finnish airspace.

And interestingly enough, you had no real reaction from the European countries on that. I mean, they blamed the Russians, obviously. And even when the Ukrainians were obviously using the airspace of European or NATO countries, the Europeans blamed Russia because, well, they started the war. But the fact that regardless of how Russia started the war, whether or not it was provoked or justified or whatever, the fact that European countries provide weapons, provide training, provide logistics, and eventually provide airspace to attack Russia makes them aggressors. I can say, we can say, I mean, legally speaking, Germany, France, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland may be considered, according to international law—I'm referring to Resolution 3314 of December 1974, that defines what is an aggression and what is an aggressor. Based on this definition, all the countries I mentioned can be considered aggressors. That means that, theoretically, Russia could retaliate against these countries. And it's very interesting because this happened just weeks after, or days after, we had exactly the same situation in the Middle East. And you may remember that just in early March, as Iran launched their response against the aggression, they obviously targeted the U. S. bases in GCC countries. And Europeans considered that as an attack against the countries themselves, while the Iranians said, well, no, we could do that, but we haven't done that. We have attacked those bases that were used to attack us, which are U.S. bases mainly.

But those countries who accepted the use of these bases and their airspace to attack us might also be attacked because they are aggressors. And that was a very interesting warning for the Europeans. But just days after that, you had exactly the same situation that developed with all these drones, or the Ukrainian drones, using them. And I, again, I'm not in the mind of Zelensky or his staff, but my feeling, my impression is that Ukrainians have understood this situation, and they tried to drag the Europeans into a confrontation with Russia. They tried to put the European countries in a situation where Russians can respond to the attacks on these countries and therefore start a larger war. I think that's what the Ukrainians are trying to do.

Incidentally, this is very similar to the situation we had between Israel and Iran. Iran has always managed to drag as many Western countries, especially the U.S., but they also tried to have others involved in the conflict because they understand that they are too weak to confront Iran. And therefore, they need to launch a larger war and let the others do the work they cannot do. And we have exactly the same situation in Ukraine. And this was, in fact, my first impression when I saw the description of the attack on Starobilsk. I really felt that this was—I mean, and again, Starobilsk is not an isolated case because you also had some attacks on the suburbs of Moscow and things like that. And my feeling was that there is no operational value in these attacks.

I mean, you can destroy a flat in Moscow. This doesn't change your situation in Ukraine. You're not defending your country like this. You're just trying to provoke an evolution or development of the situation. But you are not affecting the defense of your country. Therefore, all these attacks amount, and Starobilsk is a culminating point in that. Starobilsk, in my view, amounts to a provocation in order to have kind of an escalation, not just in Ukraine, but also probably an escalation that would drag other European countries into the conflict. So we see, and you know, this is not a mystery. I mean, Zelensky and people around him come from the same, have the same culture as those in Israel. Netanyahu, they come from the same region. It's the same culture. This is a way to address problems.

They provoke, but then when they see that they are too weak to address the problem they created, they try to expand the problem in order to involve others so that others can solve the problem for them. That's the situation we have. And that's why I think we are entering a very dangerous situation. I mean, the Russians are extremely reasonable, in fact, in that respect at least, because they try to respond, but still are very careful not to engage in something that would trigger something. So they don't want to get into the trap that has been designed by the Ukrainians. So I think from that point of view, the situation is under control, but it's under control because the Russians behave. I'm not sure the Europeans are as wise as the Russians when it comes to such a situation.

And that's a source of concern because we see that on the European side, there is a willingness to engage in the conflict. They have no reason, they have no motives, I mean, objective reasons to engage in the conflict. They are engaged indirectly. They are already protagonists of the conflict.

They are already part of the aggressor, as I said before. But it's still a quiet presence in the conflict, if you want. And of course, they would like to go deeper into the conflict, but they don't have the means. That's why when the US withdrew those 5,000 people from Poland, that created a lot of concern in Europe, because these US soldiers—it's not the number that is important.

But it's the fact that they are U.S. soldiers, because these soldiers become a stake in the conflict for the U.S. You know, this is also the reason for the presence of those, like, 50,000 U.S. soldiers in Germany or things like that. These 5,000 soldiers cannot make a difference operationally. They don't have the ability to counter the Russians or whoever. But it's a political presence. That means that if they are involved in a conflict, that would drag almost automatically the U.S. into the conflict. And that's the reason why those 5,000 soldiers in Poland are so important, because that would be the pawn that the Europeans have in order to provoke the involvement of the U.S. in a conflict.

That's the importance of these 5,000. If they were also just a battalion, that would probably be enough, but 5,000 is a significant number, it's almost a brigade. And that is the important thing. And the problem is that the Europeans would be very keen to engage the Russians, but they know they don't have the capacities and the capabilities to do it. And for that reason, at this stage at least, they still need the U.S. And it's also very interesting to understand that, because recently the Belgian Chief of the General Staff, General Frick Van Zina, said that there will be a confrontation with Russia in 2030. And in fact, the role of the Ukrainians is only to buy time for the Europeans to prepare.

So we see that the Europeans, and by the way, it's not just a declaration from him, it was also reported in a report of the Belgian parliament. So, meaning that we have here a mindset in Europe that expects a war, but they know they are not ready so far. And that's the reason why they want to prepare for this conflict, in order to be able to engage the Russians. And this mindset is directed towards war and not towards any kind of solution to the conflict. They don't want to have a solution to the conflict; they want to escalate the conflict. And recently, by the way, Kallas, the foreign minister—with quotation marks—of the European Union, said that they had not prepared for any kind of negotiation because there is no point. They have nothing to discuss with the Russians.

So we don't know. But they prepare for war. They have no more reason to fight the Russians, by the way. I mean, they would have more reason to talk to the Russians than to make war on the Russians. In fact, if you analyze that properly, but that's not the way they have chosen. They want to go into a confrontation. And for that reason, all you see today with those provocations on both sides—I mean, on the Ukrainian side especially, because I think the Russians try to react in a way that is strong enough to show that they cannot let things go. So they need to have a kind of deterrent response, if I can say it that way.

But they don't want to escalate the conflict, while the others, the Europeans, would like to have an escalation because that would lead to a situation where they could confront Russia and defeat Russia. So the perspective is very different here. And we are in this situation. So we are probably closer to a real crisis with Russia than we were one year ago or even six months ago. And the more

we see the situation—because if you look at the situation on the ground, it's extremely dire for Ukrainians—and the more time goes, the more the situation is worsening for the Ukrainians. Even if you don't see major advances, and if you don't see on the map huge advances, in fact, in a lot of cases, Kherson and others, they are not major advances.

But they are slightly. The problem is not that. The problem is that it's not the territory. Again, the problem is not the territory. The problem is that the Ukrainian force becomes depleted. They become destroyed. And this situation will lead to a point where the Russians will have kind of an open road to Odessa or somewhere else. And that will be a situation where you might expect a most unpredictable reaction from Ukraine and from the Europeans. Because the more the situation becomes desperate, the more you have these provocations coming from Europe and this willingness to engage. It's fascinating to see that it seems that we are closer to a commitment of the Europeans today than we were four years ago.

The Europeans were just helping Ukrainians, and they were protected by the narrative: Russia is losing. And okay, so they were happy with the narrative. The problem is that today, the narrative is not sufficient enough. It's not enough. The narrative brings nothing. We know that it's not true. Therefore, you need to escalate not just verbally, but also physically, materially, militarily, politically, and so on and so forth. And that means that the more the Russians have success on the battlefield, the more risk we have to be involved in something bigger. I'm not saying a World War III, because it's probably not that, but let's say something bigger. Disappointing.

#Nima

Thank you, Col., for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always.

#Jacques

Thank you very much for inviting me. Thank you.