

Chas Freeman: Crisis in Israel & Iranian Nuclear Weapons

Ambassador Chas Freeman discusses Trump being stuck in Iran, Israel's reputation collapsing, the possibility of Iran developing a nuclear weapon, and the rapid changes in the international system. Ambassador Freeman was a former Assistant Secretary of Defense, earning the highest public service awards of the Department of Defense for his roles in designing a NATO-centred post-Cold War European security system and in reestablishing defence and military relations with China. He served as U. S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia during operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdiesen Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Ambassador Chas Freeman, the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense, to discuss primarily what's going on in the Middle East. It's good to see you again, Ambassador. Always a pleasure.

#Chas Freeman

Great to see you, Glenn. I hope you're going to explain what's going on in the Middle East.

#Glenn

That's why I have you here. Again, well, you are the former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, so this is your part of the world. And I wanted to ask you, what do you make of this new... well, we hear some splits now between Trump and Netanyahu. I'm not sure what is real or not anymore. That's one of the disadvantages of the Trump administration, I guess. But again, Israel is undergoing a lot of change as it's pursuing this very aggressive foreign policy. What do you see happening here with Israel and its relationship with the United States?

#Chas Freeman

Well, I think there is a great deal of tension between Netanyahu and Trump. Netanyahu basically talked Trump into this war. It's gone very badly. It now looks as though it will end in a number of possible ways, none of which is good for Netanyahu, none of which achieve the objectives he has.

So the ways in which the war could end, you know, in many ways, the politically cleverest way for Trump to get out of this would be to allow Congress to vote an end to the war and to say, well, you know, I was on the road to victory, but they stabbed me in the back and I was betrayed by the Democrats and apostate Republicans and RINOs—Republicans in name only—and so forth and so on.

I could see him doing that. That is one way of getting out of this. That leaves Israel high and dry. And indeed, any exit from the war invalidates the U.S. partnership with Israel against Iran. That is to say, no future president is going to do what Donald Trump did. But at the moment, what we have is a memorandum of understanding, apparently a one-page document, which is not peace, not an agreement, but an agreement to negotiate. And we have the ironic statement from Donald Trump, who went to war with no negotiations and used diplomacy as a cover for a surprise attack, that, you know, we have to exhaust diplomatic means before we resort to force.

#Glenn

I guess he learned something from the first one.

#Chas Freeman

Brown, where he didn't apply diplomacy at all. It looks like Mr. Witkoff and Mr. Kushner have been removed from the process, which is now being run by professional diplomats and leaders from Pakistan and Qatar, who are attempting to mediate this. The immediate reaction to Donald Trump's statement that we're close to an agreement, which seems to be a characteristic overstatement on his part—there's been some progress evidently made along in some areas. But the immediate reaction from Israel was, oh no, great headlines, you know, about Trump selling out Israel and so forth and so on.

The Israelis are in election mode, so they're a bit subdued in their criticism of him because, of course, he could turn around and do to them what he's done to everyone who's crossed him in the United States or in Europe or elsewhere—namely, try to trash their reputation. People who are running for office don't like that, so they've held their fire a bit. That is, I think they've been quite tough. Netanyahu has been quite forceful in private, on telephone conversations with Donald Trump, but he's not publicly berated him. On the other hand, Israel's faithful stooges in the United States—people like Lindsey Graham, Ted Cruz, and others—have pulled out all the stops. This is a sellout. We need to go back to war, finish the job, and so forth and so on.

The problem for Donald Trump is he's basically cornered. On the one hand, he has Netanyahu putting pressure on him. His Jewish donors, Israeli donors—Miriam Adelson is an Israeli—\$250 million donation is not trivial. They're both ganging up on him. Part of his own Republican base is in rebellion. And his military are telling him, you know, there's no real military option. We can't hope to succeed. And they may even have asked him to give them an order in writing, which is what the military do when they're being asked to do something they know is infeasible and want to be able to

levy blame on whoever it was that did it. "Issue the order, I want that order in writing," is the characteristic response in those circumstances.

The other possibility, of course, is that this thing just sort of peters out and it goes on and so on. But the elements of the alleged deal, which is not a deal but a framework for negotiating deals on the key issues—the essence of it is essentially that the Strait of Hormuz will be open. Of course, it is open if you do a deal with Iran, so I'm not quite sure what that means. It's claimed that there would be no tolls levied. I don't believe that for a minute, that Iran has agreed to that. It's very clear that Iran is demanding sanctions relief and the release of the frozen funds that number in the tens of billions of dollars that it has been deprived of.

It's also very clear that Iran is not going to do anything unless it gets something first. Iran has no confidence at all in the United States, having walked away from the JCPOA, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the nuclear deal, in Trump's first term, having watched the United States renege on various commitments in negotiations with Riyadh and Kushner, having seen the United States repudiate treaties with others. And, of course, so, you know, I think Iran will demand payment up front before it does anything. And that's going to be very hard. So this is, as I said once before on your program, this is zugzwang. This is immobilization. Anything Trump does causes him defeat and the United States defeat. This is a ridiculous situation to have gotten into.

So basically, Iran is not going to release the enriched uranium to any third party, certainly not the United States. By order of the new Supreme Leader, M. Flaminet, it is not going to give up control of the Strait of Hormuz. It is not going to make compromises to appease the United States. It has achieved escalation dominance, and in fact, with the Israelis, it's demanding that any deal include a real, as opposed to a phony, ceasefire in Lebanon. Which brings me to the final point: if there actually is a deal, Israel is in a perfect position to sabotage it, and will do so. So, you know, as usual, Glenn, when we talk about these subjects, it's all gloom and doom that comes to mind. There's no happy, there's no pot of gold at the end of this rainbow that I can see.

#Glenn

Well, as you said, there are no good options left. And I think this is the problem for Trump. That is, if he goes back to fighting Iran, then there are limits to how long he can fight. It's unclear if he'll be able to get a ceasefire once he's out of power. He's low on ammunition and also can't win on the battlefield. But if he pursues peace, then the Iranians do not want to go back to the old status quo, so they will make sure that they hold on to the Strait of Hormuz to create incentives for countries not to host bases or impose sanctions. So you can't do one, can't do the other, but also just waiting is not ideal because the global economy is tanking. So one has to end the current, well, not ceasefire.

#Chas Freeman

Let me make a point here, and that is that Trump and his administration are paying a price in domestic politics for having misdescribed reality. That is to say, they have been claiming levels of victory over Iran which are utterly implausible and which don't hold up to scrutiny. For example, on the question of going back to war, the United States is busily deferring or canceling contracts to supply all sorts of equipment to allies and protected states. The \$14 billion deal with Taiwan, which Trump has yet formally to decide, can't happen because there's no equipment to be provided. Some of the Baltic states have been informed that they will not get the weapons they paid for on the schedule they imagined. The same is true, obviously, of equipment that has been moved out of Japan and South Korea.

Anyway, you know, the administration's been bravely putting on a show, claiming that there was no depletion of weaponry or defensive capability equipment as a result of this ridiculous war. But the fact is, they're behaving entirely in conformity with the fact that it did happen. So, you know, you can listen to them, or you can watch what they're doing, and I think it's more instructive to watch what they're doing. They're in a box, and the summer driving season is upon us. In the United States, this is the time when people take vacations and move around. The price of gasoline is \$4.55 or so nationally now. The price of oil just went down again. Oil traders, it turns out, are terminally stupid and keep, uh, falling for the same, uh, absurd, uh, tricks of market manipulation.

Um, so, um, Brent, uh, went down substantially, uh, and, um, uh, but that won't hold. And it certainly won't be a benefit if kinetic action against Iran is stepped up. And there's another point here, and that is militarily. It's not just that we've depleted our capabilities and we're causing a great deal of operational wear and tear on our forces, but Iran has used the six weeks of the effective truce to reconstitute its armed forces. And the intelligence community has totally contradicted the administration's claims of the levels of damage done to Iran's inventory of missiles. Iran is back producing drones in high volume. It may even be getting some drones from the Russians, although the Russians are using their own drones against Ukraine pretty forcefully. So, you know, there's just nothing here that justifies any optimism, really.

#Glenn

No, sadly. I wish there was some more reason for optimism. But you mentioned before that Israel would likely seek to sabotage if Trump were to go down the path of peace, that is, to find an agreement with Iran. But how far can the Israelis themselves take this, though? Because there seems to be a growing crisis of the ethos of Israel. What is the country? What does it stand for? And this is usually a problem one sees with empires as well. That is, violence abroad tends to change the society at home. You see power always replacing principles. Citizens might become too disconnected from the world. Freedoms at home decline. So how do you see... how sustainable is this for Israel? Because they do have not just the economic problem and overstretched military, but you hear also

more about very deep divisions at home, to the point where even some journalists in Israel are talking about the prospect of a civil war. I don't think they're quite there yet, but things are not going well.

#Chas Freeman

Well, I think, of course, the key to everything is the American economy, logistical support for Israel, and political backing of Israel, which allows Israel to behave not just with impunity, but with wild abandon, really. It creates moral hazard for Israel, and Israel has fallen into that trap. But the Israeli aim in Lebanon remains effective annexation. They're talking about a buffer zone, but really what they're talking about is turning southern Lebanon into the equivalent of Gaza.

#Glenn

And they can do that as long as the United States continues to supply them with weapons.

#Chas Freeman

And Trump has apparently assured them that we will. So how that fits into the proposed understanding with Iran is most unclear. Iran is not going to abandon Lebanon. It also has a sense of honor, which is at stake. So there's that. And as if this weren't enough, you know, actually Israel is being badly hurt in Lebanon. Hezbollah apparently has optical fiber-guided drones, which are very effective. And it's actually losing a fair number of soldiers and a lot of equipment. And it's been beaten by Hezbollah before. The talks with the Lebanese government are a sideshow. The Lebanese government has no authority to end the war on behalf of Hezbollah. Hezbollah has denounced the negotiations.

And so this is a sideshow, a farce staged for transformative effect. But as if this weren't enough, and all the problems you mentioned — you know, a declining economy, reservists who are fatigued and affected with post-traumatic stress disorder, and a military that is not doing well in Lebanon, the chief of the armed forces who says that the Israeli Defense Forces are in danger of falling apart, the imminence of elections in a context for Netanyahu, who is very unpopular among many Israelis — as if this weren't enough, you have Ben-Gvir dramatizing the sadism of the Israeli populace, his own sadism, and Israel's sadism with the flotilla and the people seized from the flotilla.

That has cost Israel a huge amount, not just in the United States, where only 6% of Democrats now have a positive view of Israel. And nobody below the age of 50 has a positive view of Israel now in the United States. And, you know, the only people who do are so-called boomer Republicans — that is, Republicans born right after World War II in the baby boom. And they're dying. Well, I'm actually not a boomer; I'm older than they are. I'm not dead yet, but it's coming, you know. So 15 years from now, they're not going to be around to support Israel — maybe even sooner.

#Chas Freeman

But Europeans are finally beginning to...

#Chas Freeman

React to the rape and humiliation, the beating of their own citizens in this flotilla. Some of the accounts are really quite hair-raising. So Ben-Gvir is not an aberration. He is a representation of Israeli behavior today, however much Israelis may choose to ignore it or deny it. And so Israel is rapidly losing its support base abroad. It is essentially a pariah internationally. And, you know, the United States still backs it, and we've just seen the United States force Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian representative at the United Nations, to withdraw from his campaign to become the deputy leader of the General Assembly, and he's withdrawn under our pressure on behalf of Israel.

But diminishing returns are setting in for Israel. And, you know, in the end, to go back to the irony of Donald Trump extolling the virtues of diplomacy when he has not shown any aptitude for it or even any inclination to use it, Israel has to make a strategic choice. Is it prepared to have everyone in the region and the world against it? Does it think it can survive when it's ostracized in the region it inhabits and not welcome elsewhere? Or is it prepared to try diplomacy for a change? The fact is, in 78 years, Israel has never put forward a single peace proposal — a proposal for peaceful coexistence with the Palestinians or anyone else. This is a record of belligerence that is unmatched in human history.

#Glenn

So Israelis have to make a choice, and they don't seem inclined to do so.

#Chas Freeman

And I think as long as the United States continues to write blank checks to Israel and back it without any conditions, the Israelis will not make a choice. And the state of Israel will not survive the conditions it's creating for itself. It will, like the two Christian crusader kingdoms in the late Middle Ages, lose its foreign support, and it will collapse. So, you know, I think anybody—I find it very, very difficult to understand how anyone who cares about Israel could support the course of action that Israel and the United States have adopted, because I think it's ultimately fatal to the state of Israel.

#Glenn

Well, I think you're right on the—well, I can understand the Israeli approach to their lack of, well, diplomacy or willingness to make any compromise. Because when for so long you have the United States standing behind you, why would you have to make any compromises if you're essentially allowed to do what you want? But on the other hand, you would think that Israel would begin to

readjust to new realities because, as you said, the mood in the U.S. towards Israel is changing. In other words, the intentions are no longer in the future to support Israel probably to the same extent, but also the capabilities, as we see. I mean, the U.S. will always be a powerful state, but the era of global dominance appears to be over.

The U.S. would be in relative decline, as you have other powers like China, Russia, and India—soon probably Iran as well—emerging. So if you see the U.S. having less capability and probably a less positive view towards you, then you would think that this would be the time to begin to change, instead of doing this maximalist approach, to instead start seeking some settlement with the neighbors. But I wanted to ask you about China as well, because again, you also have plenty of experience with China. You're a Chinese speaker. But Trump recently met with Xi Jinping in Beijing. Apparently, he wanted to pressure the Chinese to put pressure on Iran. But what do you see as the Chinese strategy in all of this?

#Chas Freeman

Basically, it's masterly inactivity—the Taoist philosophy that if you do nothing, everything will happen for the good, you know. A little bit more than that. But the Chinese have backed Pakistan's mediation efforts. They do want peace and stability in the Persian Gulf for very concrete reasons. They depend on it in part for energy supplies. It's an important market for them. But also, they are the defenders of the former world order that the United States and Israel have pulled down, and they want to reestablish the principles of the UN Charter and international law because that creates an environment that is favorable to them as well as to others.

So, they are, I believe, you know, they have not modified their lack of export controls to Iran. They are exporting at least dual-use equipment. I saw an article the other day that the Russians had supplied the HQ-9 to Iran, but the HQ-9 is a Chinese system, an air defense system, so I'm not quite sure whether that has been supplied. Donald Trump's military has told him that the Iranians have greatly upgraded their air defenses, and that a renewed aerial assault would produce a lot of casualties on the part of the attacking forces. That may reflect Chinese technical assistance to the Iranians. They'd be fully justified in doing that. They're a non-belligerent.

Iran is defending itself. It didn't attack anybody until it was attacked. So I think that's that. And the idea that you could somehow get the Chinese to endorse American aggression against Iran by putting pressure on Iran is ridiculous. It was never going to go anywhere. And we have this sharp contrast between the Trump visit, which was a feast for the eyes—very lavish pageantry, personal attention from Xi Jinping, walking around Zhongnanhai, the leadership compound in the Forbidden City, and so on and so forth. We have the contrast with Vladimir Putin, who comes and, you know, signs 40 agreements, has 40 different programs for cooperation, including military cooperation.

But many others, apparently they didn't quite complete the Power of Siberia gas supply agreement, although they brought it closer to closure, I guess. Probably still an issue of pricing of the gas. So,

you know, but basically the Chinese and the Russians demonstrated a model relationship of cooperation. And the Trump visit demonstrated a sort of cordial agreement—cordial hostility, I guess, is the way I would put it. And so the China relationship is not stabilized. Both sides basically agreed they would like to stabilize it. We'll see what happens now. You know, in talking to Chinese friends about this, I've cautioned them that the Trump administration has essentially trashed the ability of the United States to implement agreements.

The civil service, the foreign service, have been made basically irrelevant or incompetent. And there is no policy process that coordinates government action effectively in this administration. And so, you know, I've said to my Chinese friends, look, I know you. You've spent the last 4,000 years perfecting passivity, but it's time for you to actually take the initiative. If you want anything to happen, you're going to have to come up with the ideas and the proposals, because you're probably not going to get them from the American side. And here again, we come back to the discussions with Iran. What I'm hearing from a lot of commentators is that the United States...

#Glenn

Has demonstrated that it is, quote, "agreement-incapable."

#Chas Freeman

It cannot reach agreements, let alone implement them, because it lacks the mechanisms now—the professional staff to do that. And I don't, you know, I'm not sure how the Pakistani and Qatari mediation is working, but it's significant that it's not being run by Americans. It's being run by, in the case of Pakistan, a Chinese-protected state with a good relationship with China. China's not risking its own reputation; it's allowing the Pakistanis to do that. And Qatar, of course, has a huge incentive to restore peace with Iran. I think Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar are all in intensive conversations with the Iranians about post-war order, which would not include an American military presence.

And this brings me back to Israel, because Israel's lost the deterrence capabilities provided by the United States against Iran. Iran is not intimidated. Iran is prepared to go to war again. Iran is prepared to take more damage and suffering in the interest of national honor, if you will. And the United States has demonstrated to the world the limits of its military capabilities. As you said, we are very powerful militarily, but it turns out that there are lots of things that can't be accomplished through the use of force against a determined enemy that's well prepared.

And the Iranians were well prepared. Evidently, not only did they have a succession process in place to guard against the consequences of the murder of the Supreme Leader, which they implemented, but basically, as I understand it, when Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was assassinated, every Iranian official was then backstopped by three or four layers of successors. They also decentralized their military command so that each of the 30 provinces in Iran had autonomy of action. And of course, the result of the war—before the war, the Strait of Hormuz was open, so there was no issue.

#Chas Freeman

Now there is an issue.

#Chas Freeman

Before the war, Iran did not have a nuclear weapons program. Now it probably does. The only thing holding it back from nuclear weapons production is the realization on the part of the Iranians, who are not stupid, that if they go nuclear, joining Israel in that, then the Saudis, the Turks, the Egyptians, and others will go nuclear, and the net result will be diminished security for Iran rather than enhanced security. So a rational calculation would be that, you know, nuclear latency is still the right position. But I don't know, nobody knows what's in the minds of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard in Iran, and they are in charge. We have reason to believe that Mojtaba Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, unlike his father, sees a necessity for a nuclear deterrent. So this war may have produced nuclear proliferation.

It also has, of course, done huge damage to energy production in the region and to Israel as well as to Iran. And any fondness that the Iranian people previously had for the United States is pretty much erased. So the American military presence in the Persian Gulf is now in jeopardy. And I think at this point, you know, as I said at the outset, I would like to echo Mao Zedong. He said, there is great confusion under the heavens and the situation is excellent, meaning that confusion provides opportunities for maneuver. But I don't really see the maneuver here on our side or indeed on any side. Iran is also trapped. It can't forego the gains it's made in this war. And so you can never gain at the negotiating table what you lost on the battlefield. That's a basic principle, unfortunately, of human behavior. And so here we are.

#Glenn

You mentioned that many of the Gulf states are probably looking to adjust, to take a new or a different position towards Iran after this war is done. And, well, if you think, if you're sitting in the Gulf states, you think the U.S. position will be weakened after this war and the Iranians will be strengthened, for example, by holding the Strait of Hormuz, you know, you can be as angry or, you know, uncomfortable with this reality as you will, but to enhance your own security, you do have to recognize and adjust to this reality. So if this is the direction things are going, and the U.S. can't win this war, then in any outcome, the Iranians will essentially sit on the Strait of Hormuz. That means they can put a higher toll on countries who do put sanctions on them, who do host the U.S. bases, and...

#Chas Freeman

They can retaliate in a very effective way to any actions taken against them. This is an improvement in their position that is fundamental. And you're absolutely right. In the end, everybody in the region

is going to have to adjust to new realities that have been created by this war, and they're very unfavorable to both Israel and the United States. I know that the Gulf Cooperation Council, which of course has six members, one of them, Oman, is now an apparent partner with Iran in the management of the Strait of Hormuz and sharing the revenues from the Strait of Hormuz. I should note that Oman, unlike the other five members of the GCC, is not terribly well endowed with energy sources. And its citizens actually have to work for a living, and they do, and they are the backbone of the societies of many of the other countries in the Gulf's economies.

But the UAE has held out officially. It participated in the attack on Iran. We now know it took independent action. It has stuck close to Israel. Israel actually came to its aid with the installation of the Iron Dome and presumably with other assistance. And so if you look at the Gulf Cooperation Council, you have two countries, the UAE and Bahrain, which are part of the Abraham Accords, four that are not. Oman is cooperating with Iran, apparently. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar want the United States to stand down. The UAE remains vengeful, but even it has apparently joined its fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council in asking Donald Trump to end the war. You have the complication of the Hajj, which is going on—two million or so people in Mecca.

That will end at the end of this week, and at that point, one of the arguments against military action will be reduced. So, it's pretty clear that the Gulf Cooperation Council is split, which is another result of this war. It's aggravated the tensions between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. As I said, there's a great deal of confusion. No one knows how it will settle out in the end. But whatever happens, Iran is not going to be disarmed. It's likely going to be nuclear, or maybe it will be like the Israelis—it will be, you know, not officially nuclear but actually nuclear, some sort of plausible deniability kept in there.

Um, the new security architecture in the Gulf will have the backing of China and Russia, not the United States. And so this is a geopolitical earthquake that has been unleashed. It's not just the damage to the international economy, but geopolitically, this is very profound in its effects. And finally, I would note that, you know, Israel is obviously squirming, which is why Donald Trump has now demanded that Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others sign the Abraham Accords. Well, Qatar too. But why should they? You know, this is an Israeli effort, obviously, to snatch some sort of victory from the jaws of defeat. I don't think it will work because Israeli behavior does not endear Israel to anyone at present.

#Glenn

Just as a last question, given how significant this defeat is, I mean, if you go back to wars such as Vietnam, it had a profound impact on the U.S. psychologically in terms of the willingness to engage in similar follies and, you know, give it a few decades at least. But what will the world look like for the United States after this? I mean, what are the options for the U.S., the possible, I mean, futures, depending on what paths they take?

#Chas Freeman

Well, Vietnam is a very different situation and outcome for the simple reason that Vietnam occurred in the context of a bipolar world order, the Cold War. And while the United States was humiliated by Vietnam, and as you said, it had profound effects within the United States, other countries faced with the choice between the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc versus the West and the United States didn't see that choice as anything, you know, as a real choice. They stuck with the United States and the West. And this is not the situation now. So I don't know. I mean, it's pretty clear that this war, foreign wars generally, forever wars in particular, are deeply unpopular in the United States. Donald Trump ran on a platform of ending them. Instead, he's initiated them.

And I don't think the American public in the future is going to be willing to support any sort of further adventures of this kind. And I know that one of the consequences of the Iran war has been the dissolution of NATO. Not completely, not formally, but you have members of NATO now denying the United States the use of their airspace or their bases. You have publics that are very turned off by both the United States and by Israel. You have the revelation that the bases in Europe, for the most part, are there not to defend Europeans against a mythical Russian threat, but to provide, quote, lily pads, unquote, from which the United States can project power into West Asia. And it's projecting power into West Asia to do things that almost nobody in Europe approves of.

I mean, some withhold criticism for various reasons—fears of being charged with anti-Semitism, maybe residual guilt from the European Holocaust and the collusion of not just the Germans but many others in rounding up minorities and killing them. So, the United States will emerge from this with alliances that are greatly weakened, if they continue to exist at all, and with hedging by the major allies, Germany and Japan being the most notable examples of that. With the fabric of international law discredited, and since international law will no longer provide any inhibition against aggression, every country will be engaged in an arms race, trying to arm themselves for self-reliant defense. I think there will be countries that ask the United States, not just in the Gulf but elsewhere, to remove its physical presence from their territory.

Um, and, uh, you know, there will be exceptions. Poland, for example, seems to like having American forces on its territory. Germans are becoming more skeptical about the value of that, as are the Japanese. So I think the world is changing rapidly. But you opened all this with questions about the viability of the state of Israel. This is a situation like that question, which unfolds only with time. There's nothing instant about it, very likely. So it will be like Hemingway's famous description of bankruptcy, which happened gradually, then suddenly. And that is... we're in a transformational period, but we don't know what we're being transformed toward, and we don't know what the pace of the transformation will be.

#Glenn

Well, it should have been predictable things wouldn't stay the same. If you have a hegemonic world order after the Cold War, and this now comes to an end and is replaced by many centers of power, it would be, I guess, naive to assume that the old alliance systems, the old loyalties and interests, that they would all somehow remain the same. So, yeah, a turbulent time appears to be coming. Do you have any final thoughts before we wrap up?

#Chas Freeman

No, I think the turbulence and the transition were indeed not just predictable, but predicted. You know, some of us saw that the world was changing. So, you know, as you know, I don't like the word "multipolar," but you can say "polycentric" if you want. That comes closer to the truth, I think. New regional orders are emerging. A new international order will emerge. The United Nations has been so deeply discredited that we will have to come up with some replacement for it. What the nature of that will be, I don't know. I would say the European Union has not prospered in this environment either, and there's some question about the viability of that.

I've talked about the Gulf Cooperation Council. It seems to me that the countries of Pacific Asia are all making their peace with China. And it's not a sphere of influence in the classic sense, but there will be deference to China. Maybe a bit like the traditional deference of countries in South America to the United States, even though we didn't, as we did in the Caribbean and Central America, intervene directly or issue orders to them. Basically, people will be more respectful of China, which is what the Chinese want. They don't want Lebensraum. They don't want control. They just want more deference, more respect.

And I think it's uncertain to me how India will evolve, because India has been hegemonic in its region and remains so in many respects. This generates animosity toward it. Central Asia looks to me as though it's slowly drifting eastward, but obviously some of the countries like Kazakhstan are looking for openings to other parts of the world. We're seeing other countries like Turkey reemerge as independent countries with some influence. I don't know what happens in Europe. We've talked about that a good deal. There has to be some kind of meeting of the minds between Moscow and Brussels, or the main capitals of Western Europe, if there's to be peace and prosperity. Many, many questions. No answers is my summary.

#Glenn

Well, it's a constant, though, I think, in the human experience. It's the assumption that the present is permanent. That is, through all of history, we have massive changes all the time, but somehow we always think that the way things are now, that's how they will remain. Keep in mind, it's only been 35 years since the Soviet Union collapsed, which was a very different world. So the idea that this

was the end station, yeah. No, history has not ended. No. Even Fukuyama agrees with this now. Anyway, Ambassador, always such a great pleasure and always very educational to speak with you, so thank you.

#Chas Freeman

Well, I enjoy speaking with you, and I hope together we make a little bit of sense of a very confusing situation, but I confess to being perplexed.

#Glenn

Yeah, like most of us.

#Chas Freeman

Thanks again.