

# Col. Jacques Baud: How Iran, Israel & Ukraine Are Dragging the World Into War

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## #Nima

The messages between Iran and the United States. And here is what we've learned from the Iranian side, 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 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 the war, not the Strait of Hormuz, not the Iranian nuclear program. And ending the 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 US 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 US system makes a lot of pressure against 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, they don't even know exactly what they want to achieve, but suddenly they 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—seaports that may be destroyed and may prevent the export of other products than 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 U.S. economy. Because, I mean, that's also collateral damage from the international economy, because the price of oil will affect the U.S. 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 and peace, if you want—which is countered by a lot of people within the U.S., and war with the danger of having an even worsening economy.

And there is a very important factor as well. That is his ego. You know, 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 do, 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 position. 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 forbidden by any commitment they made in the past, starting in 1948, because in 1947 Israel didn't exist.

**#Jacques**

They never, let's say, implement or—I don't have the word, 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. And 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 U.S. 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, in 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. Wow. 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 may have difficulty having 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 the 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's, by the way, it 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 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 also is 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, 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 did the Israelis encounter a very strong, very fierce defense from Hezbollah, but at the same time—and the international community recognized—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 where 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, is that 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 to 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 understood that Israel had not, in one year of existence—and even before, 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 they are Jews. It condemned Israel because of its behavior. 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—but to bring Israel into 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.