

Matthew Hoh: Section 224 the provision merging the US and Israeli militaries

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#Nima

Hi everybody, today's Thursday, June 4th, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother Matthew Hoh is here with us. Welcome back, Matt.

#Matthew

Hi Nima, how are you doing?

#Nima

I'm doing fine. I'm doing great. Matt, I want to start with what has happened today — the announcement by the United States that they reached an agreement between Israel and Lebanon. So what is in that agreement? That Hezbollah must stop attacking Israel in the southern part of Lebanon, and they're not going to attack south of the Litani River. And Hezbollah, Lebanon stated that it has no hostile intentions toward Israel and reportedly designated Hezbollah as an enemy of the Lebanese state. So it's all, you know... then Hezbollah rejected it, said, who cares what the Lebanese government is talking about? The war is going on, and as long as Israel is in the southern part of Lebanon, we're going to attack them. And where are we? How do you see the situation between Lebanon and Israel, which is, in my opinion, more critical than the situation in the Persian Gulf, and more critical than the situation we are having between Iran and the United States in the Persian Gulf?

#Matthew

You've got this essentially quisling or collaborationist government in Beirut siding with the Americans and Israelis, coming up with this ceasefire plan. That's just basically an agreement among themselves. It doesn't include Hezbollah at all in terms of how it was constructed, so it's completely meaningless. It will be used, of course, for public relations purposes, propaganda purposes — "Oh, look, Hezbollah is breaking the ceasefire." The terms of the ceasefire, I've seen them, are absolutely ludicrous. I mean, this is just Orwellian. The Lebanese who are fighting against an occupier are the

ones who need to leave southern Lebanon. The occupier doesn't need to leave southern Lebanon. You have the Lebanese government, which has declared, as you said, Hezbollah an enemy of the state, or whatever phrase they used, essentially also giving commands to Hezbollah.

They've established these pilot zones. Who knows? I don't even know what that means, where they came up with that term from. And supposedly the Lebanese army is going to go and garrison these zones. I have no idea what happened with UNIFIL. I still don't understand what's going to happen with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force there, which is about 6,000 or 7,000 peacekeepers. The whole thing is just this insular agreement between the Americans and the Israelis that the compliant Lebanese government went along with. And so it's a farce. It's an absolute farce. It's nothing more than a press statement among three powers that agreed to the continued ethnic cleansing of southern Lebanon.

#Nima

What is your understanding of the way that Israel is fighting Lebanon in the south? Because if they're winning, or they have the upper hand in the southern part, why do they need to go to Dahiyeh? Why do they need to go to Beirut, to attack Beirut, if they're winning?

#Matthew

Well, they want to go to Beirut because they want to go to Beirut. I mean, that's part of it. The Israelis, for a number of reasons, want to take as much land as they can, and they want to cause as much harm as they can. They want to get as much land because, you know, the idea of Greater Israel extending up into Lebanon goes back 120, 140 years, however long it was. And, you know, but also, too, in the future, if there, say, is somehow—right now we're really speculating because I don't see this happening. I don't think you do either.

But say there is an agreement between the United States and Iran that ends all of the war in the Middle East, including this Israel-Lebanon war. Then the Israelis want to have as much ground under their feet as possible. They want to have, as the Israelis term it, facts on the ground, right? They want to take as much. So if you think that in 60 days there's going to be an agreement, a deal that shuts down the wars, let's get as much as we can in 60 days. You know, I mean, they also want to, in terms of—they certainly don't believe or have a desire to push all the way north with their ground forces to Beirut. They don't have the capability to do that.

But so why do they need to bomb Beirut? Well, it's to terrorize the Lebanese into submission. It's to put pressure on the Lebanese government, to terrorize the Lebanese population, to try and drive a wedge within Lebanon and somehow maybe even create a civil war, return Lebanon back to the 1970s and 1980s if they can, you know. So this idea then, if the Israelis believe that they won, they

either get a cowering of the Lebanese population by bombing Beirut and other cities. Specifically, they would bomb areas that are sympathetic or allied with Hezbollah, but some of those bombs are going to fall outside of those areas.

So then it's an issue not simply of terrorizing your opponent, but also trying to drive a wedge between the various groups within Lebanon and get those to blame. The idea being that the Israeli bombs would be blamed on Hezbollah's actions — that if it weren't for Hezbollah, then we wouldn't be being bombed by Israel, that type of rationale, that argument. And that's something that Israelis believe they can push, they can use to try and, again, cause these divisions within Lebanon to try and divide and conquer.

So, you know, I think we're seeing a number of that as well as, too, we've got to remember that it's called the Dahiya Doctrine for a reason, because this is where the Israelis established this concept of operations, this doctrine that bombing civilians for the sake of bombing civilians, killing and murdering and maiming and ripping apart men, women, and children for those purposes alone, right? The idea is a terror campaign. And the Israelis have been certainly very confident at creating terror campaigns, especially in Lebanon. You go back to how the Israelis conducted themselves in the 1980s, you know, whether it was the use of artillery, bombing, tanks, but also the use of militias, the use of car bombs, right? I mean, those are all the Israeli tactics we saw back then, and the idea being to try and terrorize your opponents into submission.

#Nima

How did you find the way that Israel, the Israeli announcement, then the Iranian reaction, and the phone call between Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump, which was reported by Axios — that Donald Trump was somehow saying to Benjamin Netanyahu, “The only reason you're out of prison is because of me, and without me, Israel would be destroyed” — the nonsense that he's putting out. And here is what Benjamin Netanyahu said about the phone call.

#Speaker 03

Talk about the call that you had with him this week, which is getting a lot of attention. The president confirmed that he said, "You're effing crazy." How did you react to that? What really happened in that call?

#Speaker 04

Well, I'm not going to get into details of our conversations. We've had thousands of—well, a lot, a lot of them. And if you think this is a crisis, you should be in some other conversations. But we've always found a way. We have so many agreements. We agree on the main things. We want to get Iran, the nuclear program in Iran, finished. We want to make sure that Iran doesn't pose a threat to Israel, to the Middle East, to America, that it doesn't develop nuclear weapons and the means to

deliver them not only to Israel and to every capital in Europe, but to every city in the United States. That's our common goal. That's what we set out to do, and to expand the circle of peace, as the President and I did in the Abraham Accords together. So we have common goals. Sometimes we have, as in the best of families, these tactical disagreements. We always find a way to work them out. And we do so as great friends. We can disagree in the morning, and by the afternoon we have common action.

#Nima

But this afternoon is going to be so long. I think the problem is so serious for Donald Trump, and he knows what's going on. And it's not going to be that easy for him. That's why he's reacting, he's communicating this way with Benjamin Netanyahu.

#Matthew

Yeah, no, I believe the story. I believe, well, first of all, Trump is known to have a temper. Trump is known to curse people out. But also, too, in the pantheon of world leaders past and present, Benjamin Netanyahu may have been, maybe, the greatest shit-stirrer of them all. I mean, you've heard from Bill Clinton, you know, supposedly when Netanyahu first met Bill Clinton, Netanyahu comes into the Oval Office, and when he leaves, Bill Clinton is just apoplectic. You know, who the hell does that guy think he is? You know, Obama was caught on a hot mic with Sarkozy or Hollande or someone, you know, bad-mouthing, you know, complaining about him. I mean, this is what he does. But in this case in particular, Donald Trump is in a trap.

Donald Trump is stuck. He's in this war that Benjamin Netanyahu helped lead him into. Some would say Netanyahu pushed him into it. And this is a war that Donald Trump can't win, and he can't seem to get out of it. And so now you have Netanyahu fighting. I mean, this is one of the real issues you have here, too, that the Americans and the Israelis don't share the same plans. They don't share the same goals. They're partnered in this war, and they both want to get different things out of it. And they both have their own constituencies they have to answer to that are not aligned in terms of where they want to see this going. And for the Israelis, the conquest of Lebanon is one of those goals. That's not an American goal.

Now, are there American advisors? Are there American neoconservatives? Are there people like Biden's top Middle East folks, Amos Hochstein or Brett McGurk, who love seeing what Israel is doing? Hillary Clinton, I think, is a big fan of all this. She described the current, you know, Lebanon as the best government we've had in 20-plus years in Lebanon. Best chance for peace is with this government. Basically, you've got a collaborationist government. Yeah, I guess so, if that's your terms of peace, you know, Secretary Clinton. But, you know, Netanyahu and Israel are attempting to make their gains out of this war in Lebanon. At the same time, too, Netanyahu and Israel understand that this is a way to get the war with Iran restarted.

And so Donald Trump sees this. He feels this. He's trapped by this. He doesn't want to restart the war with Iran. He can't win it. He can't get out of it. And here's Netanyahu threatening to bomb Beirut, knowing that if he does, the Iranians, who now everyone understands, are very sincere about Lebanon as part of this broader war. A couple of months ago, three months ago, I think different people had different thoughts as to how sincere the Iranians were in terms of Lebanon. Would the Iranians be willing to cut a separate peace? But now everybody fully understands, absolutely not. There will be no separate peace.

And so Donald Trump's watching Netanyahu provoke Iran into attacking Israel again, and then knowing full well that the political reality in the United States is such—Washington, D.C.'s political reality, not the political reality of the United States in general. But Donald Trump understands that if Iran does strike Israel with ballistic missiles, the United States is going to have to get involved again. And then the war restarts. And so you see that frustration coming out with Trump. And I don't think anyone says what Trump is saying isn't true. He is crazy. He does belong in jail. Everybody does hate him. You know, I mean, so it's not like Trump was uttering these awful, you know, falsehoods.

But yes, I think that's what we're seeing here with it. Now, we also know, too, that these types of stories were said all about Joe Biden. You know, Axios' Barak Ravid, the journalist who is both the Biden White House and the Trump White House's favorite journalist to go to with regards to the Middle East and foreign policy, I think in general because he is so dependable, he is so reliable. You know, these stories get put out in the American press for the constituencies of the president to think that there is some daylight between their president and the Israeli prime minister.

So when we saw the more than a dozen such headlines from Barak Ravid about how Joe Biden had had it up to here with Benjamin Netanyahu—he's at his breaking point, he's really angry—you know, that was meant to give Joe Biden supporters some sense, some belief, you know, that Joe Biden really was separate from Benjamin Netanyahu. And of course, he never was. You know, Joe Biden paused one shipment of bombs during the genocide. That was it. And otherwise, he provided \$22, \$23 billion worth of weapons, vehicles, munitions, equipment from the United States to Israel in the 15 or 16 months that Joe Biden was president during the genocide. So there are those purposes in this we have to understand. But in general, I think the overall story is true, though.

#Nima

I think everyone understands that the situation for Donald Trump and the current war against Iran in the Strait of Hormuz, and what is coming out of this war, is so complicated for Donald Trump, as you just mentioned. And here is what Robert Kagan said, Matt, just yesterday about the situation that he sees the United States under the Trump administration in right now.

#Speaker 05

And Robert Kagan, welcome to the show.

#Nima

No, I just have to bring another clip. This is, you know, the...

#Speaker 06

We can clearly see now what the future looks like. Iran is in control of the Strait. There seems to be no prospect the United States is going to be able to open the Strait by military force. Trump clearly doesn't want to do that, which means the Strait will be open, but under new management. It'll be under Iranian management, which means they will control who gets in and who gets out, how quickly and at what price, because they're certainly going to charge for it eventually. And this gives Iran enormous leverage in the region and in the world. And we're already seeing that leverage playing out today with the crisis in Lebanon and how Trump is handling that.

I don't see any particular options. I think we have already lost this war. It's just a question of when we acknowledge it. Trump, of course, doesn't want to acknowledge it at all, which is why we're sort of in this stasis of paralysis right now. But I don't see any options for the United States. This mistake, unfortunately, is going to be a lasting mistake with lasting strategic consequences. Well, it means that the power relationship in the region will shift dramatically. I mean, before the war began, Israel was by far the strongest power in the region. Iran was decimated, weak, isolated. After the war, with Iran in control of the Strait, Iran is going to be calling the shots.

You'll see the Gulf states cutting deals with Iran. They've already begun to do so. And you'll see Iran exercising influence over Israel's behavior, as it is doing right now in Lebanon. Iran wanted an end to Israel's bombing of Beirut. They demanded it, and Trump called up Bibi Netanyahu and told him to cut it out. That's the future. Israel is going to find itself tremendously isolated. Iran is going to be in a position to have leverage over countries as far away as Japan and Korea, who are, of course, utterly dependent on access to the energy supplies of the Gulf, which Iran will be able to control.

#Nima

But this simply is not the feeling in Tel Aviv with Netanyahu's administration. They feel something totally different, and their assessment is totally different. That's why they're feeling that they have to expand. I don't know if you heard Jonathan Pollard talking about this one was the easy one — let's go after Turkey and Egypt.

#Matthew

Right. Yeah. Yeah. The Turks have come up in a bunch of conversations again in the last week or two, you know, again because of these comments coming out of Israel about how—it reminds me, too, of the absurdity of it, the stupidity of it. You know, I remember in '04 being in Iraq, being at the Coalition Provisional Authority headquarters, the Department of Defense colonial administration

there in Baghdad. And people were talking about Iraq like we had won it, right? And that's the way you hear about this. You know, I mean, then in '04, you'd hear people say, well, the big question really is, do we go right or do we go left?

Meaning, do we do Syria or do we do Iran next? And I mean, this absurdity, standing there being like, this can't be right. These people really can't think this is going well. And then, yeah, sure enough, they did think it was going well. And I think that's what you have in Israel. You have this just total chaos, irrational view on reality that's so upside down because of the bubble they've been in for years, because of the hubris, because of the conditioning, because this is what their schools teach. This is what their media preaches. This is what their, you know, both their news media and their entertainment media.

This is the type of, even in their military schools, their military academies, their colleges, their, you know, professional training for their officers—you have the same issue in the U.S. You have a certain conceit. You have these articles of faith that are continually impressed upon. And then the idea is that, how do you dissent? How do you disagree? And the ones that do dissent or disagree do so by leaving the service. And then what do you have? You have majors, you have colonels, you have generals who've advanced through this bubble, essentially. You know, and Kagan's analysis—this is just, I mean, this is what I felt about his piece in *The Atlantic*. It's confused. It doesn't make sense.

Look, you're saying on the one hand, you open by saying that the Iranians control the Straits of Hormuz because Donald Trump doesn't want to do anything to stop them, like Donald Trump doesn't want to take it back, implying that Donald Trump or the United States has the capability to take it back. You know, this is the same argument he made in his piece in *The Atlantic*, where he said, unless the United States invades Iran, implying that the United States has the capability to do that, but it's choosing not to, as well as implying that it would actually be successful when it would not be successful. You know, in this case as well, the United States does not have the capability to take the Straits of Hormuz back. And if they tried, they wouldn't be successful.

And so his analysis here is very confused to me, you know, particularly then he asserts that the Iranians were decimated at the start of this, but now they somehow are a world power. In three months of being bombed 30,000 times, they transitioned. And I don't know how his analysis makes that leap. You know, I mean, how does he make that jump? So, you know, this is more of the same from him and his ilk—more of the same from these neoconservatives. He then goes on to say the United States has no options. Okay, well, you were just saying that before, the United States has the options to take the Straits of Hormuz back, but Donald Trump is choosing not to.

Or you're saying that Donald Trump is being weak on Lebanon and not allowing the Israelis to do what they need to do there. I mean, so there are options. They're choosing not to. I mean, none of his arguments to me are sound or valid or hold much water when they're examined for more than three or four seconds. And this is how the neoconservatives are. And eventually, what his argument always goes back to is that even if he has this soundbite of "we lost this war," well, let me tell you

what. These guys said the same thing in 2006 about Iraq. They said the same thing in 2009 about Afghanistan. What was their solution? It was to do the war larger, right? It was to send in more troops, to have these surges.

You know, it's not possible to do that here, but the idea would be that we didn't do this war right. We lost this war. The next one, we have to be A, B, and C. So I'm sure in the next conversation, Kagan's going to talk about the necessity of a trillion-and-a-half-dollar Pentagon budget in order to make sure we don't lose wars like Iran again. I mean, so this notion that we're hearing about, you know, Kagan and the neocons are clear-eyed about this and this really shows how bad this war is—no, they're presenting the same nonsense they've always presented. They—of course, everyone understands this war is a failure. It's a loss. Wow. Why are they getting—I mean, you know, but what are they saying afterwards?

What's their solution? What's the recommendation? You know, they believe an occupation of Iran would be successful. First of all, the United States doesn't have the capability to do that. We don't have 5 million men under arms or however much we would need to sustain an occupation. But alone, that occupation would be disastrous. It'd be worse than the Iraq and Afghan occupations. You know, I mean, as you can tell, I was around these people in Washington, D.C. I saw them. I saw what they did in the first decade of this century. And then, being in Washington, D.C. as part of think tanks, I had to be in places where these people were at. And so I just really have no—absolutely no—patience for them.

#Nima

Matt, what do they want in Congress when they're talking about merging the U.S. and Israeli militaries? And here is what Congressman Ro Khanna said about it, what he said about the section. They call it Section 224.

#Speaker 07

People are tired of the arrogance and insolence of Prime Minister Netanyahu telling America what we should do. The entire country of Israel has a GDP that is less than a single town in my district. Yet somehow Netanyahu thinks he can tell the American people what we should do. The person who's most upset with him right now is President Donald Trump. And everyone in America, whether you're a Republican, an independent, or a Democrat, says that we need to tell Netanyahu that America calls the shots, not the prime minister of any other country. They want less cooperation and blank checks to Israel, not more.

Only the United States Congress would dream up, at this moment, "let's actually do more for Israel, not less." And that's what Section 224 does. It's a pretty simple thing: should we do more for Israel than we already do, or should we do less? If you think we should do more for Israel, you should be against my amendment. If you think we should do less for Israel at a time when he's arrogantly

telling Donald Trump what to do, then you should be for my amendment. Now, let me just be clear: Mr. Netanyahu actually wrote to a member of Congress to put this Section 224 into the bill.

#Matthew

Yeah, it's just, and if people haven't read it, it's, I mean, it's very—it's like most of these things in the NDAA or any piece of legislation, whether authorizations or appropriations. It's incredibly short, it's incredibly vague. It basically says that the Department of Defense will create an agent to oversee the coordination of, and then it allows for research and development, industry, and a whole bunch of other things. Very vague. You can read into this whatever you want. But the idea being is that, you know, technically this is not a merger. And people will make the argument that, well, the United States has the same type of agreements with our NATO allies or with the Five Eyes for intelligence sharing and everything.

But this supersedes that. First of all, Israel is not a treaty ally of the United States. But then secondly, too, you don't have this level of integration. You don't have the integration of NATO intelligence directly into America's intelligence community. There are things we share, but there are a lot of things we don't share. "NOFORN" is the most stamped thing on any classified document. NOFORN stands for "no foreign nationals," meaning none, absolutely zero. And that would essentially take away those types of things. You're creating a whole relationship here where the Israelis would be embedded in the Pentagon's processes from start to finish. And the idea being in all of this is that this way Congress doesn't have to vote on sending weapons or sending money or other forms of assistance to Israel.

It's already baked into the Pentagon. So the IDF is not going to be the sixth branch of the Department of Defense, but at the same time, it's going to be this, you know, organization that exists throughout the Pentagon's organism. It's right, I mean, it's just gonna be there, it's gonna be circulating in the bloodstream of the department, it's gonna be the twin brother, and it's gonna be like the way this thing is written allows for the Israelis to be involved with everything, particularly on the procurement side, particularly on the acquisition side. So the idea being is that just as we're procuring fighters or tanks or rifles or whatever, the Israelis are part of that process.

And this hides the assistance that goes to Israel. This makes for no accountability. Again, Congress doesn't have to vote on it. But also, too, if you have Israel, which, as Representative Khanna was making a very good point there, you know, Israel has a GDP smaller than any of the towns in his district. Now, he represents Silicon Valley, just for people who don't know. So he's in a very wealthy district. But still, the fact that, you know, Israel is a small nation, and so that roughly \$4 billion a year that Israel gets as part of a memorandum of agreement that Barack Obama put into execution at the end of his time in office, that \$4 billion, that means a lot to them.

Now, of course, what they've received since October 7, 2023—gosh, eight months ago, nine months ago—the total was over \$20 billion for them, \$22 or \$23 billion. So now you've got to figure that

total is getting closer to \$30 billion. You know, if the Israelis are really willing to forego that, this just tells you how valuable this would be and how much they would receive with no accountability, no acknowledgment, no daylight. They would just receive things like, again, whether it be the research and development side, the actual procurement side, or other things too, because it's so vague, such as intelligence.

#Nima

My understanding, Matt, correct me if I'm mistaken, when it comes to the military and the military-industrial complex and the technology, AI, everything that is related to military production, there's something that even, for example, when you go to Russia, few people know about what's going on with the military-industrial complex—what they're producing, what the new advancements and new products are. And then it's going to be the same. It's the same in the United States. Then Israel is going to know what's going on with those advancements. They're going to have access to the new advances, the new weapons, the new technologies, everything that is happening, you know, under the Pentagon. Is that the case?

#Matthew

That seems to be the case. I mean, again, it's so nebulous and vague how it's written. But if you go—I refer people to go to Ben Freeman, who's at the Quincy Institute. Ben's been doing his work for a number of years now. He really focuses on the weapons industry. He just wrote a book along with Bill Hartung, who is probably the preeminent expert on the military-industrial complex in the United States. Bill and Ben put out a book earlier this year called **The Trillion Dollar Pentagon**, which the new copies have to come out saying **The Trillion and a Half Dollar Pentagon** now, of course. But Ben's work on this particular issue has been, you know, explosive. Ben is the one who really looked into what Section 224 really means.

And so I refer people to Ben's work at the Quincy Institute and what he's been writing about this. But yeah, it does. I mean, it's so vague. But we also know from the statements of Israelis, from just understanding how the system works, how allowing someone in like this, what it ultimately means. And it does. It means that you are—again, is it a relationship, an agreement, a partnership? It doesn't matter because it's so nebulous and vague. It can mean whatever they want, and they're going to take what they want. Absolutely. And as well, too, the purposes of it, again, hide any accountability. So, you know, there'll be this symbiotic relationship with the Israelis that is unlike what we've had before. I mean, it's already a terrible, sinful relationship.

#Nima

Yeah. When it comes to this, he said Benjamin Netanyahu somehow ordered—it's just amazing to me how he can do this—but he ordered to bring this section to be discussed, to be voted on, all of this. What does he want? You remember he had an interview on 60 Minutes: in a decade, in 10

years, we're not going to be dependent on the United States the way we are right now. We want to be independent of the United States. We're going to be separate. But the way that he's running this, he's going to... yeah.

#Matthew

Yeah. Well, the idea, like, I think that he was alluding to this idea of fortress Israel, right? Israel, and I think he actually described Israel as being a modern-day Sparta. It was him or someone else, you know, same type of building. But yeah, I mean, this idea being that there'll be no accountability. What's going on here is just, you know, this... yeah, it's a masterful thing. It's brilliant. And thank God Ben Freeman highlighted it. Thank God people like Ro Khanna understand exactly what it means. And, you know, the mistake that they're making is to try and do this now. Why they're not waiting to do it until next year when they're 18 months away from an election, I don't know why.

Because this is going to force the hand of many Republicans to say, now this is too far, we can't go with this. Because it is, it is... it's something that will certainly empower Israel. They will be, sure, independent in the sense that they're not going to be getting \$4 billion every year from the Americans, but they're going to be so integrated into the world's second-largest economy, the world's by far largest military-industrial complex, by far... I don't want—you don't want to say—I mean, with the Americans, it's hard to say strongest or most powerful military. Certainly, on certain metrics, it is. I mean, the number of warships we have, planes we have, nuclear weapons we have.

You know, the Russians can put up an argument on some of that stuff too. But also, too, then the performance against Iran. You know, what does it all actually mean? What does it all—you know? So—but yeah, I mean, it is just—everything here, nothing we hear, Nima, we can trust, nothing we can believe in. They say one thing, it's going to be the other. And the only thing that actually matters is what actually happens. And so they'll, you know—the, uh, I saw one of the defenders of the Section 224, this Richard Spencer guy, a former American Army officer, used to be at West Point, and then he's not there anymore. He's at some type of, uh, Zionist think tank.

He's the one that Benjamin Netanyahu, when he spoke to Congress, claimed that even, you know, uh, you know, me, you know, so-and-so Spencer, uh, he's, you know, he has said that, uh, Israel is the most moral army. So one of your, you know, like, just nonsense. Um, but I saw how he was defending it, and it's all spin. It's all superficial verbiage about how, you know, the United States has so many—and this is what AIPAC said about it as well—the United States has so many enemies, the world is such a dangerous place, how could we, what, are we crazy not to partner with the most innovative warfighters out there? You know, the idea being that the Americans are going to be getting more from—you know, and this is essentially parasitic. That's all this is. This is parasitic.

#Nima

Matt, Israel has a law that whoever has dual citizenship, and it's American-Israeli, they have to stick with one of them. They have to just go along with one of them and remove the other one from their citizenship status. But we don't have that. I would say here in Brazil, it's the same. And if you have the citizenship of, let's assume, Colombia and Brazil, you're not that much—you cannot go that far in the administration, for example, the Lula administration. This is the same, but when it comes to Israel, it has the same sort of law, but more restricted when it comes to Israel.

But when it comes to the United States, somehow everyone can be—like, they can even go and serve in the IDF and come back to the United States and get a higher position. And these people are going to decide whether we're going to support Israel or not. Yes, we're going to support it because I was there, I served in the IDF, and now I'm in the United States. Is that going to change, in your opinion? Because people are not happy with the way the United States is continuing these wars. At some point, there has to be some sort of understanding that this kind of dual citizenship is harming the security and the future of the people in the United States. Is that going to change, in your opinion?

#Matthew

It should. I mean, how can you have dual loyalties? And I know this is overstated. There's stuff on Facebook that says, you know, half of Congress has Israeli citizenship. That's not true at all. But some do. But even too, you have statements from, like, Chuck Schumer, the minority leader in the Senate, this weekend at the Israel Day Parade in New York City, where Bezael Smotrich led a host, an entire cadre of war criminals to take part in that parade. You know, Bezael Smotrich, who's the Israeli finance minister, who's under investigation and will probably receive an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity sometime this year.

You know, him and seven or eight others who qualify for war criminal status, and, you know, people are—you can go to Drop Site News. They had a whole write-up on who was there, and other news organizations did it too. But, you know, Chuck Schumer saying at this Israel Day Parade how Israel provides a safe space for Jews around the world and how he needs Israel because what history teaches him is he may have to flee sometime—I mean, just complete nonsense. Nonsense. Chuck Schumer is going to have to flee because of anti-Semitism from the United States of America to Israel.

I mean, just fairytale garbage that's being spewed in defense of an apartheid state, in defense of an occupying state, in defense of a state that is committing war crimes every day, that has been charged with genocide and is under investigation for it. And everyone knows that the ICJ will render a guilty verdict in several years or whenever they're able to do it. But I mean, so the idea then, too, is who the loyalty is towards. But, you know, I can't imagine a member of Congress walking into

Congress in a uniform of any armed service. You know, I can't imagine, you know, walking in wearing a uniform of the Mexican Navy, right? You know, or wearing the flight suit, you know, like here's a Thai Royal Air Force fighter pilot or something like that.

You know, but you've had that. You've had Brian Mast of Florida, who is not just any congressman. He is the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. I mean, so the senior-most person for foreign affairs in the House of Representatives is a member of the Israeli Defense Forces. Now, he's supposedly retired, but he still wears the uniform. Where are his loyalties, right? I mean, it shouldn't be any question. I don't know how you get a security clearance having been a member of another military, having had another nation's citizenship. As far as I know—and Larry Johnson or someone would be better to ask about this—they probably know better than I do. I was under the impression that you couldn't have dual citizenship and possess a security clearance, certainly not top secret.

You know, so how is this possible then? You know, that's a preclusion for good reason. And as you said, a preclusion nations all around the world have in terms of people in their government holding citizenship, holding loyalty with any other nation. You know, it's one thing to allow your citizens to be citizens of other countries. Sure, absolutely. You know, you want to be in the United States, you can be a citizen of like three or four countries, I think. You know, and I look into, you know, my grandmother's from Ireland, so I look into getting my Irish citizenship from time to time. You know, I mean, so, but you know, the idea of it being, you know, a military officer, a member of Congress, a member of the White House, it's just, you know, I mean, it's looking straight at it. You know what's wrong.

#Nima

Matt, do you see Europe today, looking at Europe today and their policies, it doesn't seem that—I don't know if they're feeling comfortable with what's going on—because when it comes to the Middle East, they're simply removed from what's going on in the Middle East. Nobody's asking the European position or their policy in the Middle East. When it comes to the southern part of Lebanon, we had no condemnation of, you know, what is happening in the southern part of Lebanon. In Gaza, the same. They're talking to, you know, we have Spain, which is different from other countries.

But when it comes to the European Union, you don't see that sort of unity to come out and condemn what's going on with the invasion of Lebanon, for example, or the West Bank or Gaza. Even we had Smotrich talking about the total annexation of the West Bank. He says that we're going to remove all those zones A, B, C. We have to dissolve these zones. And, you know, he talked about the treaty they had, the Oslo Treaty. They had to remove that. And, you know, this is the mindset in Israel today. And you see no move on the part of Europeans. They want to continue the war. It seems that the priority for them is the case of Ukraine.

And the priority for the U.S. for the time being is the case of war in the Middle East. And the two sides are not coming together because they have their own priorities. How do you see the way that

things are somehow shaping between the two parties? I don't know if Donald Trump would be able to put an end to the conflict in the Middle East before leaving his position as the president of the United States. Because I think this is going to continue on and on, and he's going to hand it over to the next president of the United States. And how is that going to reshape or redefine the relationship between the United States and Europeans?

#Matthew

Yeah, I mean, that's a really good question. I mean, he's not going to be able to end either war by the time he leaves. And certainly, I think there was some belief in Europe that if we go along with the Americans in the Middle East, then they will go along with us in Ukraine. And I mean, the Europeans have been supportive of the Americans in the Middle East for decades. But we have seen this hesitation in the last year. But we also saw last year the E3 nations — Germany, Britain, and France — you know, the three other signatories to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, right?

The nuclear agreement from 2015, you know, vote and not vote, but initiate and then oversee the implementation of the snapback sanctions agreement on Iran that were cruel, that were draconian, that were, you know, I mean, Scott Pessent, the American Treasury Secretary, will beat his chest and take credit for destroying the Iranian currency, which he does deserve credit for, you know. But, you know, also, too, the hardship that the Iranians, the Iranian economy—you can talk much better about this than I can—but the Iranian economy is already in very difficult, difficult places, right? You know, particularly Iran's monetary policy and other things, you know, throughout the last years. But then this year, when those snapback sanctions came in, man, you know, that really was destructive.

And, you know, that was the Europeans that did that. And there's not been the quid pro quo that maybe they were expecting. Now, the Europeans have a desire to, you know, their condition as well. They have the same worldview. They're saying it's part of the same empire, essentially, you know, and so you had Scholz last year talking about how when the Israelis were bombing Gaza—obviously, the Israelis were bombing Gaza—the Israelis were doing the Europeans' dirty work for them. You know, certainly comments you've seen from Macron or from Starmer, the others, you know, they're supportive of this war, even though they're trying to distance themselves now. But yeah, with Donald Trump, you know, even if they get a deal, Nima, with Iran, getting back to the U.S. and Iran, even if they get a deal, how long would that last for?

Exactly. Right? I mean, how long until conditions are such that it's politically beneficial for American and Israeli politicians to say, no, let's go back to war, as well as just the whole mindset, right? One, the Israeli expansionist need for domination of the region, two, the American need to maintain its empire, to fix what was broken in 1979, to get the order back in place that was lost from the Iranian revolution, right? I mean, those things don't go away. I mean, so you have this cycle of warfare

that's going to continue. The Iranians are doing their best to establish a deterrence, to make it so painful, not just on the Israelis and the Americans, but also on the Gulf Arab states as well as the world.

Right. I mean, putting that pressure on Japan and Korea, you know, in terms of making them feel the pain of allowing the Americans and Israelis to carry out these wars. But ultimately, you know, none of this ends until you have an American retrenchment of support for Israel. That's not going to happen. You're not going to see that in terms of action from the American Congress or the White House until the 2030s. You know, and then as well, too, a realization in Israel that they are not just overextended, but they are killing themselves, that they are setting themselves up for catastrophic failure, that they are putting themselves in a position where they will eventually lose, as well as, too, the possibilities of a civil war within Israel—again, exhaustion, overextension of the country in all different sorts of ways.

This is why the Israelis, getting back to Section 244, are desperate to become a part of the United States, right? To have that support that doesn't need to be voted on. It's organic. It's part of our process here in America. You know, so I think that's one of the things the Israelis want out of that. But, you know, until you get that, until you get an American withdrawal of support from Israel, and until you get an Israeli government that recognizes the limits of not its power, but the limits of its ideology, the limits of its theology, until you get an Israeli government that recognizes that we are leading ourselves along a path to disaster here, and we need to pull back. You know, is that ever going to be possible?

Is that, you know, can you see that ever happening? And so if you don't have that removed, then how is there ever peace in the Middle East? If you don't take away the resistance to Israeli and American occupation and domination, how does that warfare ever go away? Because what you have in Palestine, what you have in Lebanon, what you have in Iran is resistance to empire. It's resistance to colonization. It's resistance to occupation. And until those things are ended, you're going to have that resistance. It doesn't matter how much you bomb these people, how many of their children you kill. No matter how many of their neighborhoods you raze, there will be resistance until the occupation is over, until the empire leaves them alone.

So when is that going to be possible? I think we're just in this cycle where it blows cold for a while, then it's going to blow hot. And maybe we have another large war like this again at some point, you know, and God help us what that means then, because you got people like the Kagans advising the White House, saying, you know, the mistake the Trump administration made was it didn't hit them hard enough, you know, or some nonsense like that. Yeah, I think that's where it's going to go. But yeah, no, Donald Trump leaves the White House with neither this war in the Middle East nor the war in Ukraine resolved. Not through his actions.

#Nima

Matt, looking at the Trump administration today, who's the most powerful person within the administration, putting Donald Trump himself aside? My understanding is that I don't see J.D. Vance there. I don't see Marco Rubio, Pete Hegseth. These are not... And what I see is, my understanding is Stephen Miller together with Jared Kushner, some sort of, because they're so powerful. The negotiations—look at the negotiations in Ukraine with Russia. It's after, when it got somehow serious, Donald Trump, you know, asked Jared Kushner to join Steve Witkoff.

And he joined Steve Witkoff in the negotiations with Iran. Nobody knows what Jared Kushner's position was in those negotiations. He's not an expert. He's not a diplomat. Steve Witkoff was not a diplomat. And we know, on the other hand, Stephen Miller, when you look at the way he's talking, it seems to me that he's the head of the Pentagon, he's the head of the State Department, he's the head of everything. What is your understanding of that? Who's running the show, putting Donald Trump aside?

#Matthew

I have seen things Nima had said, that Miller's star doesn't shine as bright as before, but I'm loath to agree with that. I think you're right about Vance. I think he's been humiliated so many times by the president, and Vance is so desperate to get the president's endorsement in 2028 that he's not going to rock the boat at all. You've seen a culling of the cabinet recently, whether it be Noem or Bondi or Gabbard now. Interesting, of course, that they're all women. But I think that Marco Rubio has a great amount of influence. I think Rubio is very much involved in all this quietly as a national security advisor, you know, for over the last year or so, whenever Mike Waltz was fired. You know, Rubio had taken on that role as a security advisor, and there was criticism about him that he's being outshone as secretary of state by Witkoff and Kushner.

Shouldn't Rubio be the one going to meet with Kushner? The Russians going to meet with the Iranians, you know, shouldn't he be? And I think Rubio's role as national security advisor is to be sitting next to the president. And I think he sees that as paramount. He can send whoever he wants to go make these talks, but they have no decision-making power. Even when the vice president went to Islamabad, you know, the reports were that every time a question came up, Vance had to leave the room to go phone back home and get an answer. Right. So, and who's sitting next to the president when that phone call comes in? That's Marco Rubio. Pete Hegseth, obviously, is just a front man. I think Dan Kane is someone that—the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I think Dan Kane is someone that the president does listen to.

And I do think that, you know, we're going to learn later that Kane has been very forthright with the president about the inability of the Americans to win this war militarily, the stupidity of restarting this war. I think this is why Donald Trump is so reluctant to restart the war, doesn't want to see it happen. So, I mean, you know, Susie Wiles, the chief of staff, seems to be playing her role quite well, at least in terms of my estimation. But I think the problem we have, though, is that some of his biggest advisors—and I agree completely with you about Kushner, absolutely, 100%, absolutely—I

think one of the problems we have on the economic side, you know, I think he does listen to Scott Bassett.

I think he used to listen to Howard Lutnick. I don't think Lutnick is, you know—now I'm getting into the side where I don't know that as well about. And so maybe there's a story in the, uh, you know, financials today about how Lutnick is inseparable from, uh, you know, Trump, but I did get the feel that Lutnick is not the person that he was 14 months ago in his administration. Um, but, um, I would say that the thing that should scare the hell out of all of us—and all these people I just rattled off—I mean, good God, Nima, you watch one of these cabinet meetings, and I swear it's like I'm watching a Batman cartoon, and it's the Joker surrounded by all his henchmen, right?

I mean, the cast of characters, the cartoon villains that the president has assembled around himself, is just spectacular. But I think one of the things that really scares us here is this idea that he gets a lot of advice from the gang on Fox News—from Sean Hannity, from Jesse Watters, from General Jack Keane, from Hugh Hewitt, and from Mark Levin. I don't think those stories are exaggerated. I think this is what we knew about him, Trump, in his first term—that he listened to Fox News. This is my understanding of how Doug Macgregor gets into the Pentagon at the end of the president's first term. It's that, you know, Macgregor is going on Fox, and he's saying smart, good things that the president agrees with.

And that's, that's—now, you can ask Doug directly, I guess, you know, but certainly that was my understanding, if I remember correctly. Uh, you know, so I think, though, the outsized importance that these men on Fox News have in terms of affirming the president's beliefs, shaping his worldview, touching his sensibilities—I think that's a big part of this. Supposedly, either according to Politico or The Economist, or one of them, General Jack Keane was the mastermind behind this blockade. That's General Jack Keane saying, "We should just block Qatar," and that catches the president's attention. And then the president's turning to Hegseth and John, you know, Dan Keane, and saying, "How about a blockade?" You know? And yeah, so, you know, I'm really afraid that, again, this cast of cartoon villains surrounding Donald Trump—it may be the Fox News gang that he's listening to the most. But also, too, I want to—with Rubio, I think Rubio has had a very, very important role in all this. Just quiet. Again, filling that job as National Security Advisor.

#Nima

The guy is smarmy.

#Matthew

Yeah, yeah, he is. He is. I mean, you watch him—the guy—you watch him in his hearings. And... yeah, I mean, one thing you can say about Rubio, he's confident. He believes in what he believes. And he's not a dummy. He may be ignorant about things. He may be shaped by an ideology. He may be shaped by a fantastical and mythological-type story about Cuba and his parents and all of

that. But certainly, you know, dealing with the person directly, I think he is quite smart, someone that needs to be respected. We can mock him. It's the same way with Donald Trump. I mean, the number of people who've mocked Donald Trump over the years—and I grew up outside New York City, so in the 80s I knew fully well who Donald Trump was—and he was mocked all the time. And people made fun of him and everything else, and look where he is now.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. Thank you so much, Matt, for being with us today. And please go to Matt's Substack. Let me bring it up here. It's here, yeah.

#Nima

Here it is. You can go there, you can subscribe, and you're gonna enjoy what Matt is talking about because he's providing us with some solid information. From his point of view, many of you would know if you follow us on this podcast, Matt has his own sort of view, and it's so important for all of us to see all these dimensions, all these angles. But his understanding is so good. I really enjoy every time I talk with him.

#Matthew

Well, thank you, Nima. I appreciate that. And everyone who's watching, subscribe to Nima—like, share. You're getting close, you're getting towards half a million, right? Yeah, it's getting close. But yeah, I appreciate you saying that. Thank you, Nima.

#Nima

Thank you. Thank you so much. You.