

Chas Freeman: The Greater Israel Project Is Collapsing

Ambassador Chas Freeman discusses how Greater Israel is coming to an end. 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. Chas Freeman's substack: <https://substack.com/@chasfreeman662157> 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/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined again by Ambassador Chas Freeman, the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense. Thank you for coming back on the program. It's great to see you again. What I really wanted to talk to you about today was, well, I guess the future of Greater Israel as this project, which at least many people in the Israeli government appear to embrace and is also supported by the United States to a certain extent. However, we see that Israel now appears to be very, very much overstretched, and its international reputation in the world is also seemingly in freefall. And again, this is your part of the world as a former ambassador to Saudi Arabia. So I was wondering how you are reading the situation in terms of the future of Israel, but also the Greater Israel Project, which is supposed to give some strategic depth to Israel.

#Chas Freeman

I think it's in trouble. For a long time, it was essentially concealed. It's become ever more evident. Nobody, particularly outside Israel, supports it. I suppose there are Zionists in the United States and Europe who sympathize with the objective, probably religious Zionists who misconstrue the Bible to conclude that God promised the sons of Abraham all this land from the Nile to the Euphrates. Perhaps they support it. Of course, Abraham also had a Muslim son, Ishmael, the father of the Arabs, not just a Jewish son, Isaac. And so I think this is all religiously inspired Jewish nationalism at its worst. And it is infeasible without the support of outside powers, especially the United States.

And Israel is rapidly running down its reservoir of support in the United States. It's doing the same in Europe. I know that the EU is finally, apparently, beginning to consider—or countries in Europe are

considering—sanctions on some of the more extreme fascist fanatics in the Israeli cabinet, Ben-Gvir being at the head of the list. Ireland has banned him and Bezalel Smotrich. France is apparently considering that. And of course, his treatment of the European participants in the flotilla to Gaza has now led to official investigations, including in France, which has been stalwart in its support of Israel from the inception of the Zionist state.

So the external support is withering. The internal support appears to be strong. But then the internal support for various atrocities—genocide in Gaza, the war of aggression against Lebanon, the attempted annexation of southern Lebanon, south of the Zahraani River, or at least the Litani, which is a bit to the south of the Zahraani River—all of this has strong support from Israelis, as do the pogroms, for the most part, in the West Bank, the Jewish terrorism against Palestinians there. Some Israelis are deeply disturbed by that, but they are definitely a minority.

So Israel is at odds with the entire world, and the latest polls, as you implied, show that it is widely regarded as a pariah internationally. Ninety-seven percent of Turks feel strongly that Israel should not exist. So Israel used to pose the question, does Israel have a right to exist? And the answer now that is coming back from the world is, not if you behave the way you do, then you do not have a right to exist. So what is at stake is not just the prospect of Israeli expansionism, but the very continued existence of the Israeli state itself, in a sort of parallel to the demise of the two Christian crusader kingdoms in the 11th and 12th centuries in Palestine, which expired when they lost their foreign support.

So we have, in the middle of all this, clearly, the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who is a very brilliant politician, whatever you may think of his policies, understands that the writing is on the wall. And so we have an effort being made in the United States Congress to essentially incorporate the Israeli armed forces into the U.S. Armed Forces for every purpose—research and development, procurement of weapons, you know, and so forth. And so it will be essentially against the law for the United States, for a general in the U.S. Army or Air Force, or an admiral in the Navy, to refuse to share information or weaponry with Israel.

This is particularly ironic because at the same time that this is happening, the Defense Intelligence Agency has just raised the alert on Israeli intelligence activities directed at subverting the United States. Israel is now in the highest category of counterintelligence concern, at the very moment when its congressional supporters—Stooges, really, bought and paid for—are trying to deal with the issue of declining support by making it impossible for anyone to oppose aid or assistance to Israel. So this is a very complicated thing, but I think the Israelis have finally reached a moment when they have placed the dream that some of them have of a greater Israel in grave jeopardy.

#Glenn

Well, it also appears that they are alienating a lot of their states in their immediate neighborhood. And actually, I want to ask especially about Turkey on this one, because they haven't assigned an

enemy status to Turkey, at least not yet, but looking at the rhetoric, they appear to be drifting in that direction. And also, again, as a former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, how do you see the Saudis responding to this? Because it looks as if they're getting a bit more anxious about the ambitions of Israel in the region as well.

#Chas Freeman

Well, they're very coy, typically. You know, a Saudi press release is an oxymoron—it doesn't really exist. Somehow, when God apportioned the public relations gene, he omitted the population on the Arabian Peninsula for the most part. But I would say several things. First, it's become totally obvious to all of the GCC—the Gulf Cooperation Council—member states and peoples that Washington pays attention to Israel and pays no attention to them. There's a very articulate former minister of information from Kuwait, who I listened to this morning on the BBC being interviewed, a very deft practitioner of public relations, notwithstanding the point I just made.

And he was quite clear, you know, and the context of the interview was probing the question of whether the Gulf Arabs would, in fact, defect from being platforms for American power projection in the region, make their peace with Iran, keep their distance from Israel, and participate in the emerging new security architecture in the Gulf. And now I'm extrapolating from what the interviewer said, but my own view is that there is an emerging core of that architecture crafted between Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. And the objectives of this are both to manage cooperative security—that is, to produce a Persian Gulf which is free of any great power presence and which is self-managing—and also to build a military-industrial complex in the region that will promote self-sufficiency and self-reliance through partnership between these four countries and whoever else chooses to join them.

So I think the answer to the question is that the Gulf Arabs, Saudi Arabia included, are very much drifting into an arrangement in which these four countries work with Iran, not against it, and deter Israel. Here, one has to look at the end result of the Israeli-American war of aggression against Iran, because that is producing a situation in which the United States will never again be with Israel in an attack on Iran. Politically, that is becoming impossible. Donald Trump sticks to the script that he was handed by Benjamin Netanyahu. But Benjamin Netanyahu himself is in a pillory in Israeli politics. He is now openly devoted to... He sees the Iran war and his relationship with the United States...

#Glenn

as existential challenges.

#Chas Freeman

And he's more concerned about his own self-preservation than he is about the future of his country. This is quite a reversal because I think he planned to go down in history as the man who opened the

door to Greater Israel by seizing territory from neighbors in Syria and Lebanon, by gnawing at and subjugating Iran and Yemen and other opponents. And this dream is now in tatters. It is not going anywhere.

#Glenn

But on Turkey, what is it about Turkey that makes it such a big problem for Israel? Because I heard this comment being made by leading Israeli politicians that they could, in the future, be a worse threat than Iran, which is interesting because Turkey is, of course, a NATO member. It's an important partner of the United States in the region. Why exactly? Because I think many people are a bit confused in this regard, because the Turks appear to look the other way when it comes to, for example, the genocide in Gaza. They give some lip service, but it's usually limited to rhetoric. They're not actually doing anything. So what is it that makes Turkey such a big problem?

#Chas Freeman

Well, I think you're referring ultimately to the prediction by former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett that after Israel had defeated Iran, it would have to take on Turkey.

#Chas Freeman

And the basic premise here is the Israeli concept of absolute security for Israel, which means absolute insecurity for everyone else in the region. And it means that any country with the capacity to confront Israel in any context is regarded as a target of efforts to subordinate it. That is the root cause. There are details. The Israelis are in bed with the Kurds in northern Iraq, and although the conflict in Turkey itself between the Turkish and Kurdish elements of the population has been greatly moderated, the PKK, the leader Abdullah Öcalan, has made his peace with the government, and so forth.

Israel is very much in the business of divide and rule, and it is an opponent of Turkish rule, therefore, towards the Kurds. It's also an opponent of Turkish influence in Syria, which it sees as a menace zone. And so the Israeli perspective is essentially, as I said, that as long as someone else is left standing in West Asia, Israel cannot be secure. Israel has no diplomatic strategy at all. It has an entirely military strategy. It has put forward no peace plan for the Palestinians or anyone else in its 78 years of existence. And it doesn't seem to be brewing up such a proposal. So its only approach to those who oppose it is military.

And now I want to make a couple of comments about Turkey. Turkey is in an absolutely central position with respect to many issues. You simply cannot conduct a policy toward Central Asia, Russia, the Black Sea countries, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Greece, Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean, Syria, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, farther south in West Asia, Afghanistan, and the Red Sea, the Horn of Africa, the EU, the European agglomeration in general, without the acquiescence or

support of the Turks. So they are in an absolutely central position. I know of no other country that touches on so many vital interests of so many other countries. And this gives them leverage.

But it also, in the post-Cold War era, means that their relationships with their neighbors, European and otherwise, have changed. Yes, Turkey is a member of NATO, which is an alliance in the strict sense of the word. That is, the members of that alliance have an unconditional commitment to come to each other's aid by whatever means they constitutionally determine in the event of a challenge. Turkey is now, I would say, more in an entente relationship with the rest of the alliance. That is, its engagement is conditional, not unconditional. And it has turned its attention, after having been rebuffed by the European Union, mostly on the grounds that it's Muslim and large, and some in Europe want to affirm a concept of Christendom, which would be polluted by the presence of a large Islamic state. Apparently, Albania is not considered a menace.

So, the Turks followed a trajectory of assimilation to EU norms, which was very helpful. The European Union excels at assimilating countries to its norms. And that has changed Turkey. There's been some reversal of that under Erdogan. But basically, Turkey is now affirming a non-European identity. It is affirming a West Asian identity, an Islamic identity, and a Central Asian identity. And this means that, like Russia, after three centuries of efforts to Europeanize, it has turned away from Europe and is emphasizing its own civilizational roots. So this is a situation that greatly complicates the prospect for the continued existence of Israel, because Turkey is now an active partner, not just of Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, but an active force in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation—57 countries, 2 billion Muslims.

Turkey aspires to be a leader in that context. This is utterly incompatible with a normal relationship with Israel. So while you're correct, Turkey has not done anything very concrete other than supplying some of its citizens to futile flotillas intending to resupply Gaza with humanitarian goods, its attitudes have become resolutely, almost unanimously, very anti-Israel. And this also, because of the Israeli view that if you are anti-Israel, you're anti-Semitic, this also grates on the Israelis. So I'm sorry to offer such a complex answer to what ought to be a simple question, but it really isn't very simple, I think.

#Glenn

I liked your comment that 100% security for Israel would be 100% insecurity for its neighbors. Henry Kissinger once made a similar comment, and I often think about this comment because I think this was a key flaw in general in the post-Cold War era, that is, with the hegemonic peace. That is, if the political West would seek security through absolute dominance, that would be 100% security for the West as the goal, which would often mean 100% insecurity for others. I know the Russians, for example, have quoted this. I think Lavrov, maybe 15 or 20 years ago, quoted Kissinger on this simply because that's how they saw it. Anyway, I digress. I did want to shift a bit towards Iran because it looks as if Israel could knock out Iran.

This could turn everything around because they seem to be overstretched now by the IDF's own account. They say they're overstretched in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria. Well, it's essentially become too much. But if they could knock out Iran, which is seen as the head of the snake, then all the other pieces could start to fall into place. But how do you see this actually developing? Because we hear that Netanyahu and Trump had a spat. I'm not sure how much of this is theatrics and how much is real. But it looks as if both the US and the Iranians believe that they can wait out the other side, that each side is being exhausted, especially in the economic sphere. So how are you assessing this? I mean, is it possible to defeat Iran now, or has this ship sailed?

#Chas Freeman

I think the ship has sailed. I think there was a vigorous effort to take down Iran, so vigorous that it has depleted not just Israeli but American weaponry and defense equipment. The ability to intercept drones or missiles is greatly degraded. I don't think the United States really has a military option now against Iran—one that would not be more costly than beneficial. Israel, of course, has essentially subcontracted the destruction of Iran to the United States. And the argument between Trump and Netanyahu, I think, was real. Trump is frustrated. Netanyahu is doing everything he can to prevent a negotiated end of the war, as he wants it to continue for the reason that we both discussed before, and that is, Iran is the only effective obstacle to the establishment of Greater Israel.

Um, it is the only effective, uh, respondent to the Israeli effort to achieve, um, absolute security. I had very much in mind Henry Kissinger's observation on this, which I think was wise. Um, and I agree with you. We see in several contexts examples of why he was right about this. Anyway, what's happening? First of all, there are no negotiations, and structurally, a negotiated agreement appears to be impossible for two reasons. One is the structure of the negotiations themselves, which are indirect, either conducted by amateurs with no proven ability to reach closure in any context. I'm speaking of Messrs.

Witkoff and Kushner, who have totally discredited themselves with the Iranians, have no credibility at all with anybody, really, other than Donald Trump. And even he has turned to using Pakistani and Qatari intermediaries to exchange messages with Iran. There are no negotiations. There may still be some message passing. But it is very clear that Iran understands that when it is negotiating with whoever—Pakistanis, Qataris, Kushner, Witkoff, whoever—it is negotiating agreements ad referendum to Donald Trump. And when Donald Trump receives what has been achieved at the negotiating table, he feels free to alter it at will. So he rejects agreements that have been apparently reached. He prevents any meeting of the minds.

And to the extent that he approves anything, he then checks ad referendum to Benjamin Netanyahu, who is determined not to have any agreement. So Netanyahu either introduces poison pills into the process—you know, you must sign up to the Abraham Accords was one of them, and, you know, get rid of all your nuclear program is another. These are non-starters, and he knows it. And so, in

addition to this, both Netanyahu and Trump are prisoners of domestic political forces. Netanyahu is in danger of going to jail if he's displaced from power. He has in his cabinet some of the vilest people on the planet, who are determined to eviscerate him if he makes any compromise with Iran or with Lebanon. And so I want to talk a little bit about Lebanon eventually, but let me stay on Iran.

Trump has the pressure of the midterms, the summer driving season, with the prospect that if the Strait of Hormuz is not opened without condition and continues to be blockaded by the U.S. Navy, we're talking \$200 a barrel of oil. Very good for Norway, by the way. That would replenish the state fund. So anyway, he's also under pressure, of course, obviously from Netanyahu. It's clear that he fears the release of the Epstein files. He's also under pressure from his plutocratic Zionist donors, to whom he owes his office, to whom he's beholden. So stasis, stalemate, is what happens. Actually, it's worse than that. It's zugzwang, as I've said before. That is the condition in a game of chess in which any move you make reduces your leverage and degrades your position and accelerates your defeat.

So now, to go back to what's happening, basically, as you said, we're in a contest between Iran and the United States to see who can hold his breath the longest. We're both underwater and in danger of drowning. And Iran calculates, I think correctly, that it can outlast the United States for several reasons. It's there. It's not at a great distance. It does not have... of course, its navy has been destroyed at least eight times completely, but it does seem to be able to close the Strait of Hormuz notwithstanding that. And what we have is not a ceasefire, although the press refers to it as such, because both sides are firing at each other intermittently. I would say it's an agreed de-escalation.

But there's something very important that has happened in this context. International law has always demanded that reprisal for attacks, violations of international law, aggression, be proportional—proportionate to the damage that you've suffered. Israel has never agreed with this. It has been deliberately disproportionate in its reactions to any slight whatsoever. Iran now appears to have adopted the Israeli standard. So if the United States Navy fires on Iran, the Iranians will fire back a multiple—a response that is many times greater than the initial American provocation.

This has worked for Israel. It probably will work for the United States. The danger, however, is that Iran, which has clearly concluded that there will be no negotiated resolution of this war—the danger is that as Iran escalates in retaliation for American provocations, it will begin to fire real shots at American naval vessels. So far, it's essentially fired warning shots. I think we're going to see the sinking of a naval vessel or two as part of the American blockade. The blockade is difficult to sustain. It is, in effect, blockading the entire world's access to the Persian Gulf.

Iran is quite prepared to allow ships through if they respect its rules. The U.S. Navy is apparently not prepared to let anybody through. And, of course, it's not effective in stopping everyone. So we're in an escalation mode, and we're probably looking at a resumption of kinetic force. Just this weekend, Iran has twice hit facilities in Bahrain and Kuwait, apparently because these are the remaining functional bases for American activity in the region and most identified with the provocative attacks

that have been mounted on Iranian communications towers, radar systems, and so on on the island of Qeshm.

So this is a pattern of tit-for-tat that is moving into higher gear, not lower. And there is no negotiation. I'll just conclude by saying that there are some people who imagine that Donald Trump's erratic behavior—you know, repudiating positions he's taken the day before, altering those to new positions, in other words, repudiating his own prior statements, claiming preposterously that things are happening that are not happening, manipulating the stock market with these statements and so forth—are a deliberate bargaining style in which he's trying to confuse the other side, which he has succeeded in doing.

I don't think so. I think he is not the master of the art of the deal. He is the master of the art of the shakedown. He's able to bully and coerce, but he can't close an agreement that is a true meeting of the minds that leads to mutual advantage. And so I think the Iranians are correct in their judgment. There will be no negotiated resolution of this war, which leaves Donald Trump with the option of sailing away, which is not easy for him because he has so eroded his own credibility that the claim he would make that he was sailing away from a victory would not be believed by anyone but his committed true believers.

#Glenn

Yeah, I see some parallels there with the Iranians as well as with the Russians. That is, they did the same after the Alaska meeting as well, when they said, well, we will deal with all the underlying causes. So, in other words, a ceasefire is not peace. They kind of agreed, and then I'm not sure if it's Trump just changing his mind or if he's just weak, that he couldn't get the Ukrainians and the Europeans on board. Anyway, he shifts back again. And also, yeah, I think they look towards Iran because of how much it goes back and forth—everything they agree upon means, well, essentially nothing. So you can only play this game for so long before all the other actors begin to pick up on it. Well...

#Chas Freeman

You know, there is a consistent record of what I call contriving ceasefires with Israeli characteristics. Those are ceasefires in which one side is supposed to cease fire while the other continues. And so we see a ceasefire in Gaza that is no ceasefire at all. People are still being subjected to genocidal attack. What was supposed to be a 53% temporary Israeli control of Gaza expanded to 60%. It's now expanding to 70% unilaterally by Israel. The condition that an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza would be accompanied by Hamas disarmament is nowhere in prospect. And so there is that example of the Board of Peace, which has no active members and is doing nothing, no money other than the initial funds kicked in by the UAE to establish an office and hire some people.

Um, you know, so this is a farce. And one could argue that the same thing has been true in the Ukraine dialogue with the Russians and Ukrainians. By the way, Congress seems to be moving to restore some sort of aid to Ukraine, but I don't know what the significance of this would be, given the fact that we don't have the production capability to replace the essential weapons for Ukraine, and the fact that the Ukrainian attacks on St. Petersburg and the International Economic Conference there appear to have used the airspace of the Baltic countries, NATO members, to vector in.

This is clearly going to stimulate a Russian counter-escalation. And we're seeing it, actually, with the increased savagery of Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure and production facilities. In the middle of all this, Volodymyr Zelensky does not distinguish himself by writing a sarcastic, insincere letter to Vladimir Putin, which is guaranteed more to enrage than to engage, and which has, of course, been dismissed by the Russian president as a public relations exercise, which indeed it was. But my guess is that the Russians are going to make a real effort to make Putin's words real. He has said the war is nearing its end.

What does he mean? I think he means Russia is going to move on the rest of Donetsk, the 15% or so that it doesn't already control, and achieve its objective of controlling Luhansk, Donetsk, 80% of Zaporizhia, part of Kherson. And at that point, it will be open, once it has achieved its objectives, to some sort of discussion, but not before, because it doesn't have any confidence either in the United States or in the European Union, which is still essentially wasting everyone's time by debating whether it should even talk to the Russians, and Ukraine, which is recalcitrant and living on fantasy hopes, not anything real.

So I think we're seeing the collapse of the Trumpian foreign policy, not just with respect to Iran, but with respect to Israel-Palestine, with respect to Ukraine, with respect to European security architecture, with respect to NATO, where the members are beginning to flake off from their core commitments, denying airspace or base usage to American forces engaged in West Asia. Yes, this is a bad moment. And, you know, it's one in which we are seeing once again that the United States is so-called agreement-incapable. That is, we have so thoroughly dispensed with diplomatic professionalism and the normal rules of statecraft that we are unable to resolve the issues we want to resolve.

#Glenn

I keep always thinking as well, as a comparison between the Iranians and the Russians, that a lot of the strategic calculations are wrong, I think, based on the failure to assess the threat perceived by the opponent. That is, if we recognize that Iran, for very good reasons, considers this war to be an existential threat as opposed to simply a regime change, then we would be able to predict that they would be willing to absorb all kinds of pain in order to get on top of this. Same as the Russians. I mean, they see this as an existential threat irrespective of what NATO thinks.

And as for this reason, if we could recognize this, then we could see why there are some very strict limitations on what kind of outcome and peace settlement it can accept, but also to understand how much pain it's willing to absorb and also the lengths it's willing to go to ensure that it achieves its objectives. But again, in Europe, they think that recognizing that Russia sees this as an existential threat somehow legitimizes it, because that means that NATO is threatening Russia. And, you know, the European leaders refuse this. And, of course, their, you know, talking heads in the media, they're the same. They insist that this is simply a story about Russian expansionism. But when you get the analysis wrong, then suddenly you can't understand the motivations in terms of how far they're willing to go, again, what they can achieve in the peace. Again, I digress. You mentioned before you wanted to get to Lebanon, and I thought this was important.

#Chas Freeman

Before we do, let me make a comment on statecraft as it relates to the Ukraine war, because I think it's very clear that in politics, perception is reality, and perceived interests are the basis for actions. And there is a hierarchy of interests. The supreme interest, which Iran is fighting for, is national identity — the culture, the language, the existence of a community that calls itself Iranian. But below that, there is the hierarchy of interests. There are strategic interests, interests which, if neglected, if not defended, lead to an attack on vital interests. And this is exactly the scenario with the Ukraine war. Iran is a different matter because it already faces a challenge to its identity — the whole idea of destroying the Iranian state, which is the basis of Israeli policy, aided and abetted by the United States, is one thing.

Russia, in looking at the expansion of NATO and the proposed incorporation of Ukraine into NATO and the American sphere of influence, followed by the introduction of American weaponry and forces in Ukraine if the same pattern of previous NATO expansion were followed, has seen this as a strategic interest — preventing it as a strategic interest. Because if it were allowed to happen, Russia's vital interests would be under constant threat from the weaponry and the hostile presence in a hostile country like Ukraine. So this is all very logical. And you don't have to assert that Vladimir Putin is an evil man or that the Russians are somehow, you know, viscerally savage or whatever the Russophobes claim, to see that they have a logic to their interests and they're pursuing them on a very realistic basis.

Maybe they've made some wrong choices. But the motivations and the motivating force, it seems to me, are quite obvious. So, you know, I wanted to say this before talking about Lebanon. And let me talk a bit about Lebanon now. Because here we have a farcical ceasefire, too, between two parties that are not at war — that is, the Lebanese government, which has not defended Lebanon, is not shooting at Israelis, not doing anything, and the Israelis. They have reached a ceasefire, but they weren't firing at each other. So this is nonsense. The party to the war in Lebanon is Hezbollah. That is the movement of the state within the state, if you will, that has to be dealt with, appeased perhaps, or defeated perhaps, in order to end the Israeli war of aggression.

Hezbollah insists on the removal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. The Israeli defense minister says that the ceasefire agreement, so-called, that has been reached through the Lebanese government allows a permanent Israeli presence in southern Lebanon. It basically enlists the Lebanese army as an auxiliary of the Israeli army in smashing Hezbollah. Nabih Berri, the Speaker of the Parliament and the head of the Amal Party, a Shiite party that parallels Hezbollah in its constituency and some of its objectives, has described this ceasefire as booby-trapped. And I think he's absolutely correct. It's not going to stop the fighting. It is really farcical when you look at it because, as I said, it's a ceasefire between people who aren't fighting each other.

#Glenn

Yeah, that's a great point. It is Hezbollah who's fighting, so it's a bit strange to leave them out of this agreement.

#Chas Freeman

Well, Donald Trump says he has spoken to Hezbollah somehow, indirectly. And I think Rami Khoury said that he'd also spoken to Elvis. This was equally credible.

#Glenn

Well, this is the problem, though — this kind of dishonesty, which is just so repetitive. And also, you know, Trump essentially becoming the boy who cried wolf all the time. It's, well, we're close to a deal, or we're going to annihilate them, and going back and forth. You can only do this so many times before what he says means nothing. Like, if he says, I'm talking to Hezbollah, I'm just assuming he's not, because it doesn't mean anything anymore. But, of course, Lebanon is also exhausting the Israelis, though. And to what extent do you think the Iranians will accept this, though? Because they've made it very clear that they link any peace directly to Lebanon. And they can also shut down the Red Sea, and they have a lot of other things they can do if Israel does not tone it down or not necessarily fall in line. But it just seems like this greater Israel view is hitting a wall at some point.

#Chas Freeman

Let me make several points. First, the concept of Greater Israel makes anything the Israelis do regional in nature, not limited to the specific target that it's particularly attacking. So if Israel annexes lands in Syria beyond the Golan Heights on the pretext of protecting the Druze in Syria, that is part of this larger strategic expansion of Israeli territory. That's true in Lebanon, too. So Israel is pursuing a region-wide policy, and that makes its war with Iran regional. Second, Iran from the very beginning has said that any war by Israel and the United States on it would be regional. And it has,

in fact, attacked eight countries in response to this war. It's even bombed part of Turkey, and Iraq, as well as the GCC countries. And so it's not a surprise that Iran sees the solution to this war in a regional context.

And that has to include an end to the war of aggression by Israel against Lebanon and some recognition by Israel of frontiers. In the end, Israel cannot have peace, and the region cannot have peace as long as Israel has no frontiers, as long as it cannot define its borders properly. And it has no agreements with anyone on borders. So I think Iran calculates that there is not going to be a negotiated resolution of this war in terms of the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, which the Iranians are effectively exerting administrative control over. There will not be a negotiated solution for the wider war in the region unless and until the United States does what it could do, which is pull the plug on supporting Israel and incapacitating Israeli aggression.

So I think the foreign minister of Oman, Bousaidi, was entirely correct when he said that the source of instability in West Asia is not Iran, it's Israel. And that realization is what is driving things toward the future. The independent security architecture free of great powers that I mentioned, the rapprochement between the Gulf Cooperation Council members and Iran, and the inclusion of Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan, Syria in the requirement for any kind of peace. This is realistic in the sense that the only way you can have peace is dealing with all of these issues together. It's unrealistic in the sense that Israel is completely unwilling to address these issues and the United States is thoroughly confused. But to the extent it knows what it's doing, it is backing Israel.

#Glenn

Well, let me ask a last question about the sustainability of what the Israelis are doing. Because you mentioned before that if Netanyahu goes down, there seems to be a very broad consensus anyway around many of his key policies. But again, you can say the same in the United States in terms of a lot of its wars. You find consensus across the parties. Both the Democrats and the Republicans tend to support a lot of these wars. But in Israel, irrespective of what they want, it's the political stability. It seems to be fragmenting, and this is going to impact its ability to—well, essentially carry out the policies as it wants. How much do you see this as being a problem? Because some people refer to this as stable but very divided. Others see it as becoming increasingly unstable, I've heard people arguing that they could, you know, move towards civil war. I haven't seen this in the Israeli media. So how do you see this?

#Chas Freeman

Well, let me first say that as far as the United States is concerned, the American public is thoroughly against this war now. It has very little support, even from Republicans. The cult that Donald Trump leads continues to back him. But there's been a vote in the House of Representatives to invoke the War Powers Act against him. I think, frankly, it's a pretty pathetic effort because if you read the resolution, you'll find that it says he should not be allowed to start a war except in defense of allies

or partners. What's a partner? Anything you want is a partner. So this is very weak. Nonetheless, Donald Trump accused the Congress of being treasonous for having questioned his— I guess this is his *lèse-majesté*, in a sense.

Anyway, so that's on the United States. On Israel, I don't know what's going to happen. I mean, I think first, the main point I would make is that it's a mistake to focus on Netanyahu. He's not the cause, he's the symptom. He may have been the helmsman on a ship sailing to disaster, but if you remove him from the helm, others will continue on the same course—maybe worse. We see this from the members of his cabinet, who openly espouse genocide, torture, ethnic cleansing, massacres, and inhumane treatment of people generally, and nobody who is not Jewish-Israeli is worthy of protection, apparently. So you have an apartheid system working within Israel proper, and you have military oppression, Nazi-style basically, beyond the original borders of 1967 Israel.

So, I don't know what will happen in Israel. I think Israel is in a position where it's likely to be gradually depopulated, and more and more of those who would normally be the backbone of the Israeli state will leave. I suppose the Orthodox who refuse to defend Israel and whose theology denies that the state of Israel should exist—that is to say, they do not believe that Israel should be recreated until the Messiah arrives, which no one has been able to prove has happened. I don't know. I mean, I think we're really looking at an existential challenge, not just to Iran from Israel, but to Israel from not just Iran, but Israel's neighbors.

Because as I said, in 78 years, Israel has never taken a diplomatic initiative on its own to make peace, to achieve peaceful coexistence with anyone. When it has entered peace agreements, this has been after bludgeoning by the United States—Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton maybe with Jordan—and it is now directly defiant of the United States. Donald Trump says that there's a ceasefire in Lebanon, that it must not attack Dahiya, the suburb in southern Beirut which is the stronghold of Hezbollah. And, of course, first of all, that does not answer the Iranian demand or the Lebanese demand that Israel not attack anyone in Lebanon. It's, you know, a partial gesture.

But Netanyahu, in calling off an attack on Tahrir, says everything else is going to go forward as planned. So Donald Trump, shove it. And that is why I believe that angry phone call happened. I also believe it was leaked for effect, for political effect—both to convince Iran that Donald Trump was actually doing something against Israel and because the Israelis benefit by agitating the Zionist donors to Trump against him and putting pressure on him. So there was a public relations move in the end, but I think the reality is the tone of the conversation probably was almost as ugly as Barak Ravid—he is the Mossad agent who's also a journalist for Axios—reported it.

#Glenn

Yeah, I initially thought that perhaps it was theater, but then with Trump, the language used—you know, everyone hates Israel now, such a delegitimizing of Netanyahu—a lot of this, it wouldn't fit in with the usual, what you would expect. So there might be, yeah, some credibility to the divide growing between the two, but...

#Chas Freeman

Well, you know, there's a key point here, and that is, notwithstanding the congressional, the House vote for the War Powers Bill application, the United States is now dysfunctional on many levels—domestically and in foreign policy terms. Therefore, whatever happens in these contexts, whether it's Gaza, Ukraine, or the Persian Gulf, is going to happen notwithstanding American ineptitude. You cannot look for leadership from Washington.

#Glenn

Well, on that note, we'll wrap up the video. So, yeah, thank you very much. As always, my friend, I appreciate you sharing your insights. It's difficult to understand what's happening at times. There are too many actors, too many variables. So I appreciate you clearing this up. Thanks again.

#Chas Freeman

It was not a jubilant conversation, but thank you for engaging in it.