

Col. Jacques Baud: Iran & Israel Just Opened a NEW WAR FRONT in the Mediterranean

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#Nima

Hi, everybody.

#Jacques

Today is Monday, June 8th, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Carl Giacobbo, is here with us. Welcome back, Carl.

#Jacques

Thank you. Happy to be back on your show.

#Jacques

Karol, I want to start with what happened last night and the attack. Yesterday we learned Israel attacked Dahia finally. The reason they attacked is still somehow so strange, what's going on, because they attacked Dahia thinking they were going to hit some Hezbollah commanders in a building. It seems that after the attack, they realized the building was empty and didn't hit anybody, but they killed some ordinary people in the area close to that building. Then Iran said, if you attack—because Iran was warning the United States and Israel—if you attack Dahia, we're going to respond. I thought yesterday that since none of the Hezbollah commanders were hit by the attack, Iran was not going to respond.

Maybe Yemen is going to respond to what has happened in Dahia. Then Iran came out and said, no, we're going to hit Israel as we said before. And they fired something like 20 missiles to the northern part of Israel. From what we've seen so far, from the footage that's coming out of Israel or outside in the region around Israel, four of them hit the target. Then after the Israeli attack, Donald Trump came out saying, okay, you attacked Dahia, Iran is attacking you, that's it. You're not going to attack

Iran, and I'm not going to support you attacking Iran. Then Benjamin Netanyahu said, as we know, he's running the show, and he attacked Iran, and Iran is responding right now. It's some sort of madness, what's going on. What is your understanding of the situation in West Asia?

#Jacques

Well, that was completely predictable. In fact, we knew it would happen like this. We know that Netanyahu wants to drag the U.S. into a war in the Middle East. He wants to have the U.S. militarily committed with troops in the Middle East. So that's a given fact. It has been said many times. It's a constant. In fact, it's the follow-up of a policy that has been implemented by Israel since the 1950s. So there is nothing new there. Now, as to the current situation... we have seen that Israel has constantly tried to drag— I mean, the U.S. understands that it has been trapped into this conflict. We know, because that was published on the website of the State Department, that the U.S. intervened at the request of Israel.

Later, we have seen in a recent interview with Donald Trump that he said we shouldn't have been there. He acknowledged that the U.S. has nothing to do militarily in this region. And that's a situation that has been created by Israel. So everything was already clear from the very beginning. And each effort of Donald Trump to get out of this trap has been sabotaged by Netanyahu. And by the way, we have seen exactly the same thing when it comes to Ukraine and the U.S. and Russia. Each time that Donald Trump tried to do something and tried to establish some kind of dialogue with Russia, Ukraine and the Europeans managed to sabotage this.

So we have, in fact, actors such as Zelensky in Ukraine and Netanyahu in Israel who have identified Donald Trump as the weak link in the whole chain of command in the West. And they are trying to take advantage of this. Donald Trump has too big an ego to say that it was a mistake and to withdraw everything. He's trapped not just in a situation; he's trapped in his own ego. And everybody understands that. Trump is a prisoner of himself in that sense. And that's exactly what Netanyahu is trying to use or misuse in order to have his own policy. He knows that the situation with Iran and in Lebanon has gone too far and that the U.S. cannot withdraw.

And therefore, if at best the U.S. wants to stop, Netanyahu will make every effort to drag them further into the conflict. That's exactly what we have. The fact that the building was empty or not plays absolutely no role. Because we have already, last week by the way, discussed the question of Dahiya and the threats on Dahiya. So they knew that Israel was about to attack Dahiya. And Iran already last week had threatened Israel to respond to such an attack. So everything was clear. The question is, why hasn't the U.S. reacted stronger against Israel, knowing that Israel was about to attack Dahiya? And that shows, as we have seen in Ukraine, by the way, that the Western — I mean, in that case the U.S., but we can extend that to the European management, or the crisis management — doesn't depart from a sober assessment of the situation.

All this crisis management is the result of gut feeling, gut reaction, and in fact, are one-man shows. And you have a couple of advisors or individuals who may advise the decision-makers. And we have that in the U.S. I mean, it's fascinating to see that in all the discussions we have seen in the past weeks or months between the U.S. and Iran, the State Department seems to be absent from that. The State Department, as in any country, is an apparatus designed to assess a situation, to provide an element of language, and things like this, in order to solve situations. But apparently, in the U.S., this is... I mean, the role of the State Department is not apparent.

And we have exactly the same thing when it comes to France, Germany, the UK, and even the European Union. This is just a one-man show run by individuals — Ursula von der Leyen, Kaja Kallas, Keir Starmer, and so on and so forth. And each time they seem to react based on what they feel about the conflict, not about what is known about the conflict. It's probably just what they know about the conflict, but not even what is known about the conflict. I assume they have intelligence services who know what will happen. And in fact, in the U.S., we even know that the CIA and other intelligence agencies have warned against an attack on Iran. They knew how things would happen.

But despite this, decision-making bypasses all this advice. So we have here an extremely simplistic decision-making process that avoids all the capabilities that we used to have in modern democratic government. And at the end of the day, the decision is concentrated just around the brain of one individual. And even if we can talk about a brain, but that's another question, you see. And that's exactly where we are. And so the U.S., instead of reacting to the situation and starting to get on top of the problem, they seem to remain as a tool, or a toy even, of Israel. Because as we see, the person who is running the show in the conflict is Netanyahu, in fact.

And Iran, on the other hand, understands that the only way to resist or to, I mean, the only way to survive in this situation is to have a credible deterrent policy. And I insist on the word credible because credible means that you show that you have the means to respond, and you have the means to respond with strength, efficiently. But the credibility is about the willingness to use those assets. And therefore, when Israel threatens to attack Dahiya and Iran says, if you attack Dahiya, we'll have to respond, they have to respond. Otherwise, their deterrence will not be credible. So that's where we have a situation that is extremely dangerous because it can, in fact, create a kind of snowball effect and create a situation that worsens the whole situation.

And Israel knows that. And they know that in order to keep the U.S. involved in the region, they need to have a serious situation. And that's the reason why they continued this operation in Lebanon, although they haven't even respected the ceasefire that was decided at the end of 2024. And that's, in essence, the reason why Hezbollah had to continue fighting, because Israel didn't comply. And this situation has become kind of, let's say, a primer. If you talk about explosives, when you want to launch an explosion, you need to have a primer. And that's exactly what Lebanon is in this conflict. Because Israel has limited capacities to attack Iran, but Lebanon is the best way to inflict damage, to gain territories.

So Lebanon is the ideal primer for a conflict. And they are using that in order to escalate the conflict and, in the end, to force the U.S. to be committed in the conflict. That's the mechanism of the whole thing. So all that was absolutely predictable. And in fact, we have said that the only way to get out of this conflict—that's the perverse consequence of this—because Iran has understood that. But I'm not sure that the Americans have understood that, and probably not even the Israelis. Not because they are not able to understand, but because they are too convinced they are superior. But Iran has understood that in order to get out of this loop, the only way should be to completely destroy Israel, to have what I have mentioned many times: a decisive victory.

And that's what Israel is trying to avoid, because they know that if they destroy Iran, that will probably trigger something that is unpredictable in the region. But this is the only way for Iran to get out of this situation, because of the fanaticism of the current government in Israel. Unless we have a change in Israel, and we have people who understand that we are in a loop that can only go towards escalation, and ultimately that can go to the erasure of Israel—unless we have that, we are on the way to going in that direction. And that's a situation that I think the West is not aware enough of, because we keep being convinced that Iran has only limited response capabilities. And that's certainly not true. So that's a little bit how I assess the situation.

#Jacques

Donald Trump said, you know, right after seeing that both sides are attacking each other, Donald Trump came out and said Iran and Israel must immediately stop shooting. And this is the problem, Carl, that when they attacked Dahia, they said that the United States—Donald Trump—came out and said, we didn't know about what's going on. But the Israeli side said they had the green light from the United States to attack Dahia. We have two different stories about the attack on Dahia. That's why Iran has decided, because there is no way to control Israel.

#Jacques

Well, it's hard to tell who is telling the truth in all that, because, first of all, you cannot trust Trump on that. You know, you never know exactly what he means. He's always just hours away from a superb deal that is in favor of everybody. He is solving the problem. Every day he's solving a new problem. But none of these problems are solved. He claims things that are obviously wrong and things like this. So that's one part. But that's part of the personality of Donald Trump. He wants to show, in a very childish way to some extent, how good he is, how best he is, and things like this.

The Israelis, in my view, are more, let's say, dangerous, because it might be that they said that if Iran does this, they will continue, and maybe they didn't receive any response from the U.S., and they consider that the U.S. has been informed, and they have accepted, and they have green-lighted the thing. From the Israeli side, I wouldn't trust them either. And I don't know exactly how the dynamics work. We understand from what has happened in the last three months that the U.S.

ultimately does what the Israelis want to do, period, because of internal pressure, because of many factors. In any case, the question here is that we should have obliged Israel to go back to its borders. Or, on the other side, since they don't have any border, let's say, on the border of Lebanon, because this border is known. The one of Israel is not known. But let's say along the Green Line, the line of 1949.

#Jacques

In any case...

#Jacques

We should have forced that. We should have a UN, you know, if the US were serious about the situation, they would have, with other countries, become convinced that the UN Security Council would agree with such an idea, if the US agrees, that Israel should withdraw to the Green Line and that the UN should enforce a ceasefire. We already have UNIFIL there, which is mainly, not mainly, but at least a big part of UNIFIL are French troops, by the way. And we see that there's absolutely no activity of UNIFIL in order to prevent the advance of the Israelis, although that would be their task.

And that requires a decision from the UN Security Council to force Israel back into its borders. And so we have the tools. We even have the troops already deployed there. We already have a mandate for these troops, but we don't want to apply it. That means that we are not serious about this. You know, in all the discussions we have, and when you talk to other people and think about the situation in Lebanon, nobody talks about UNIFIL. But UNIFIL, in fact, is deployed exactly in the area where the Israelis are deployed, meaning between the border of Lebanon, the southern border of Lebanon, and the Litani River, exactly where the Israeli forces are. So what is UNIFIL doing?

#Jacques

Is it the same way that we have between northern Cyprus and southern Cyprus? Because there is the presence of the UN.

#Jacques

Well, it's similar, but it's a different type of peacekeeping operation. In Cyprus, it's more like a ceasefire observation, in fact. But in Lebanon, this is more like peacekeeping in the real sense of the word, because they have not just observers, but they have troops that normally should be able to fight. And in fact, they used to fight. And the strange thing, by the way, we had a report earlier this year that the French forces, for instance, were fighting Hezbollah. So we see that the UNIFIL mandate has been misused to avoid protecting Lebanon. It has been kind of a tool for some troop-contributing countries to fight Hezbollah.

And of course, this is also very disturbing because you have a peacekeeping force that is supposed to impose peace in the region and to prevent any invasion from Israel, because that was the initial purpose of UNIFIL in this particular region. It was not just to observe, it was also to prevent. It had a prevention and deterrent function in theory. And then in this UNIFIL operation, you have many countries. There are probably 10 or 12 countries, I don't remember exactly. In any case, a large contingent is made up of the French forces. But strangely enough, the French government decided to define Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

So, of course, that means that their mandate now is not just, because if you consider Hezbollah as it is in Lebanon, they consider Hezbollah as a militia, but for the defense of Lebanon. Hezbollah is not considered a terrorist organization in Lebanon. You know, it's not part of the armed forces, but it's not even—it's been granted a status. They were accepted, and they have a status to be there as a defense structure against external threats. I remind you that in the 80s, the Taif Agreements were signed within Lebanon to disband all those militias that used to fight each other within Lebanon.

But Hezbollah has never been an organization to fight other militias inside Lebanon. Hezbollah has always had as a mission, as a purpose, to fight external threats, namely the Israeli threat. And that's the reason why, despite having signed—I mean, not despite, within the Taif Agreement—Hezbollah was granted the right to remain in place while other militias were disbanded, with the idea that as soon as the Israelis would comply with the UN resolutions asking for the departure of Israel from Lebanon, then Hezbollah would disband. That's the mechanism.

That's why, when you start in that sense, Hezbollah was considered by the Lebanese government as a resistance movement — a defense movement, if you prefer. Now, since Israel keeps invading Lebanon, keeps some Lebanese territory under its control since 1982, that, of course, justifies the presence of Hezbollah. And that justifies the fact that you have constant fights at the border between Hezbollah and the Israeli forces. And, of course, Israel considers Hezbollah a terrorist organization. But if you look at the history of the movement, if you look at the way the movement was developed and the rationale of Hezbollah, including all these bunkers and tunnels, which are essentially defensive structures or infrastructures, it means that Hezbollah has no claim over Israel.

So the definition of terrorism is simply wrong. It cannot apply to Hezbollah. But Israel, as soon as they want to have the rest of the world helping them, they define individuals or some groups and so on as terrorists. So terrorism has nothing to do with the operational dimension of the group. It has to do with the political support Israel can gain through this idea of fighting terrorism. That's why, for instance, after 9/11 in 2001, Israel tried to redefine the Palestinian organization as a member of Al-Qaeda in order to have the support of the Americans. They said, well, the Palestinians have exactly the same purpose as Al-Qaeda in order to have this support. So it's a game from Israel to use different denominations in order to gain political and military support from the rest of the world.

And you know, when you fight terrorism, you're essentially allowed to do anything. You can use torture, you can kill children, you can do all that. As long as you name them as terrorists, everything

is allowed. And that's exactly how the West has operated in Iraq and things like that. You know, in Iraq today, for instance, you have all these... Kataeb Hezbollah, Kataeb Imam Ali, and so on and so forth. All these Kataebs are in fact resistance movements. They are resistance movements against the U.S. military presence in Iraq. But they are considered as terrorist movements by Israelis, Europeans, and so on. In reality, they're simply resistance because the U.S. should not be in Iraq in the first place. So we use the word terrorist just in order to fight them. And that's exactly what happens in Lebanon.

That's the reason why UNIFIL cannot take sides with Hezbollah, because that would mean they take sides with terrorists. And here you see, that's why when you have a peacekeeping operation, you need to have an impartial presence there. That's the purpose of a peacekeeping operation. You cannot engage in a peacekeeping operation when you consider one of the parties you are supposed to protect as a terrorist. You can't. That's exactly the dilemma in which UNIFIL is, and that's the dilemma in which the French forces are, which is, by the way, a very important contingent. And that's also a contingent that is part of a country that is a permanent member of the Security Council. Therefore, they have an important political role in these UNIFIL settings.

But the French, in fact, are not impartial in that. And that's where you see how the way we understand our management of crises is childish. And that's very much, when you listen to Jean-Noël Barrault, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, you understand that this is somebody who doesn't understand the whereabouts of what he does. He just wants to treat it as, they are terrorists, they are this and that. He's just naming things and naming people, but it has no substance behind this. And even the substance may be conflicting with the real interests of the country we're supposed to help and even conflicting with the task and the mission of the UN peacekeeping mission. So this is the situation where we are. In essence, everything is there. We have all the necessary tools to do things, but we are incapable of managing them. And that's the sad part of this.

And that's why we should, you know, I used to be responsible for the policy and doctrine of the peacekeeping operation in the UN for two years. And UNIFIL was obviously one of the important missions because it's one of the most important missions, by the way, that the UN has, given the permanent state of conflict that you have between Israel and Lebanon. And I say permanent because it's not just after October. Each year you have thousands of airspace violations of Lebanon, for instance, and you have the Israelis bombing or intimidating the population by flying at extremely low altitude in order to terrorize the local population and things like this. And the UN reports that. If you read the regular reports of UNIFIL to the UN Security Council, all that is mentioned — all these intimidations, all these violations are mentioned — but there is no reaction.

There may be some protests here and there in a resolution, but there is no concrete action. And today, and even after November 2024, as I said, Israel had to leave the Lebanese territory, but nobody made any effort to enforce this ceasefire. And that led to the situation that we have today. So the international community is largely responsible for all the massacres that are occurring. And in

addition to that, they don't even condemn Israel for that. There's no condemnation. They didn't even condemn Israel for attacking Iran. So where are we? As I said, all the instruments are there, but nobody has the intellectual ability and the wisdom, if you want, to use those tools intelligently.

#Jacques

That's where we are. Carl, Netanyahu's office announced that they will not accept the Iranian attempt to impose a new equation. This is the main point on their part because they know how the situation has changed since the war against Iran started. And West Asia today is not the way it was before the war started. That's why Iran is talking this way: if you attack Doha, we're going to attack you. That wasn't the case before the war started; there were red lines before Israel attacked Iran, the first round and the second round. Right now, they're not going to do that. If they do that, there will be a response not coming only from Iran, but from Yemen, from the whole axis of resistance.

I think this is the new case, and Israel is somehow in denial that the situation has changed. I don't know when it comes to the United States. Let's put Israel aside. The United States has its limits. They have their own sort of restrictions to stay in the region. How long do they want to stay in the region? Are they going to convince the government in Israel that it's not going to be a permanent sort of presence in the region, because that's hugely costly for the United States? Then, when it comes to the Israeli part, you mentioned the occupation of the southern part of Lebanon. That's one of the main problems right now. You have to get out of Lebanon.

There is no way to have any sort of agreement with Lebanon, with acts of resistance, without withdrawing from the southern part of Lebanon. If they're not going to do that, then we have this sort of fight happening over and over. And it's not going to be Lebanon. It's going to be Iran. It's going to be Yemen. Last night, we learned how Yemen attacked Saudi Arabia. At first, I thought it was Iran, then it was announced that Yemen was attacking Saudi Arabia because they thought that Saudi Arabia somehow is cooperating with Israel. But this is what Israel is trying to avoid — the mere outcome of the war, that the situation has changed. They cannot get back to what it was before the war.

#Jacques

Well, the problem is that, you know, Israel is a spoiled child. That's it. So that means that so far they never received any blame for everything they did wrong. They could kill children for decades, and that became a little bit more apparent since October 2023. But October 2023 was simply the result of massacres that happened before, and constantly. I mean, this is a regular policy, and the illegal occupation of territories — the Palestinian territory, the southern part of Lebanon, the Golan — all these territories are illegally occupied. And there are even resolutions of the Security Council and the UN, even the General Assembly, to condemn this presence and to condemn Israel for doing so.

But there has never been any enforcement for this. So Israel, in a certain sense, says, well, you can talk, but if I want to do so, I will do it. The problem is that as long as it was about killing civilians in Gaza, in the West Bank, in the Golan, or in Lebanon, that was fine. I mean, Israel has those Merkava tanks and all that, so they have military and firepower superiority, and so they could afford to do that. Now, the problem has changed because attacking Iran has been the bridge too far. And that's exactly where they are. And now Iran — they have put Iran in a position in which Iran can dictate what it wants. That's something that the Israelis and the Americans, by the way, didn't expect.

Because they thought that Iran would collapse within days. Because again, we're back to this kind of guts-driven policy instead of brain-driven policies, where you don't act upon intelligence but you act upon feelings. And the feeling was that Iran would collapse very quickly because 80% of the population doesn't support the government, and so on and so forth. But that didn't happen. As a result, Iran has become reinforced through this attack. And not only has it been reinforced, but it's used this kind of new status, the regional status, in order to use the Strait of Hormuz as leverage to compel the US to stop the attack and to force the US into a negotiation.

The problem is that the U.S. is not the one who decides there. Israel decides. I mean, Israel is very keen to send others to fight for it, but not the opposite. And that's what Donald Trump has not realized. Or maybe he has realized, but doesn't want to acknowledge it. In any case, this situation now is — we can talk about the Strait of Hormuz also, but not just that — the fact that Iran has demonstrated also to its neighbors that they are not impressed by the U.S. presence, that they are not impressed by the importance of the U.S. military presence in their countries, that they are ready to destroy this presence.

That has completely shifted the balance, because now the Arab states, especially the GCC countries, have understood that U.S. presence is a liability and not a solution. And therefore, their relationship with the U.S. needs to be somehow reset to some point. Israel doesn't want to acknowledge that. And since they are so arrogant, they cannot accept that they failed in their mission and that they gave Iran more leverage than it used to have. But that's a situation where this is the miscalculation of Israel that led to the situation in which Iran now has more leverage than the U.S. has. And in fact, the U.S. is losing its leverage every day. And we see that even towards Israel, because the U.S. is not even able to impose a ceasefire on Israel.

So the U.S. has basically lost its influence. Probably not 100%, but to a large extent, it has lost its influence in the region. And you remember that a couple of weeks ago, a couple of days ago in fact, the U.S., or Trump, told the GCC countries to sign the Abraham Agreement with Israel, and they refused. That's something that probably would not have happened before. But now, with this new situation in which Iran has been able to demonstrate that it is a regional power, and even a more important regional power than Saudi Arabia, and even a more regional power than the U.S., this has given — and in fact, this is the miscalculation of Israel that has created that situation.

And nothing, again, this was predictable. Israel, in its history, was very good tactically with enemies that were inferior in size or in weaponry or in firepower and things like this. And that's the reason why, in most cases — by the way, in most conflicts, with the exception of 1973 — all the other conflicts were, in fact, Israel attacking by surprise and using the opportunity of surprise in order to be successful. But taking someone by surprise is, I mean, it still requires some skill, I understand that, but at the same time, it doesn't show that you are strong.

It just shows that you decided to, in fact, go — you crossed the red lines of international law, which the others didn't expect because the other countries were abiding by international law. And you have one that doesn't play by the rules, and therefore he has a kind of success. But that's the situation. So Israel always had its success through tactical successes, in fact, not strategic ones. And it has always been like this. The Israelis are good tacticians. They are not good strategists. They are good at politics. They are good at influence and things like this. And again, probably not in a kind of grand strategy type, but by using the influence networks that they used to have in most countries.

And you can see that even in European countries, not just in the US but also in European countries, you have a huge influence from the Israeli networks in the government. I mean, the French government is a government under influence. There's absolutely no doubt about that. Everybody knows that. And that's also part of the unpopularity of the current government, by the way. And that's also the same in Germany. And if Germany lost its seat at the UN Security Council in the recent bid to be part of the non-permanent members of the Security Council, for the first time in the last 30 years or something like that, Israel says that. And why that?

Because it aligns with Israel. So that shows that these countries are under influence, but this influence can change because there is a point where, and that is something that is very strong today in all countries. We have the same thing in the United States, by the way, that the largest part of public opinion now opposes Israel because of all the infringements on international humanitarian law and things like this. And everybody understands that this has become completely apparent with the attack on Iran and the attack on schools, hospitals, and things like this — not just in Gaza, but exactly the same pattern in Iran, exactly the same pattern in Lebanon.

It's exactly that. And that, all that, by the way, and that's where you see the shift in the balance. Because these actions of Israel have in fact legitimized actions of outsiders, such as Yemen. Remember that the intervention of Yemen — Yemen has no territorial claims with Israel. Basically, they are far away. They have no real conflict with Israel as such. But what happened since October 2023 is that Yemen understood the situation in which the Palestinians were, and they decided to use the principle of the Responsibility to Protect, which is a UN principle. And that's the origin of the Yemenis bombing Israel. Up to the point, I mean, the idea of bombing Israel was not just simply to bomb Israel. It was to force Israel into a negotiation process. And of course, a ceasefire.

And that was the condition that the Yemenis had set from the very beginning. So they didn't attack Israel because they are Jews or because they are this or that. They attacked Israel because Israel

was attacking a civilian population. And according to the principle of the Responsibility to Protect, in the UN jargon, it's R2P. This is a principle that was adopted by the United Nations in 2005, based on the experience that you had in Africa, especially, in particular, with Rwanda in the mid-90s. And this principle says—I don't want to go into the details of that principle—but essentially it has three pillars. The first is that every country is responsible to protect its own population. By the way, Israel has the responsibility to protect the Palestinians.

It's an obligation as the occupying power of the Palestinian territory. The Israelis have the obligation of protecting the Palestinians. That's the first pillar. But obviously, Israel doesn't comply with that. The second pillar is that the international community should help the Israelis to solve the problem, to protect the population. And that's something the Western countries have declined to do. No single country in the West, especially in the West, has made any effort to advise Israel to protect the Palestinians. There was no protest whatsoever. On the contrary, the French government, the French parliament, the German parliament, and also the British, by the way, tried to justify the massacre of civilians, in fact, but not to protect them.

That would be the second pillar of the Responsibility to Protect. And also, the second pillar was not fulfilled. And the third pillar is that when everything has failed, individual countries are allowed to intervene in order to protect the endangered population. And that's exactly what the Yemenis have done. Seeing that everything has failed, the other pillars have failed, they decided to use their missiles in order to force Israel into a ceasefire and a negotiation process in order to protect the Palestinians. And that's exactly what they are doing today. Because again, you have the Israelis—I mean, they are still not done with Gaza, by the way, they are still...

#Jacques

against international humanitarian law and international law at large. In fact, in Gaza, because they are occupying a territory which is a sovereign territory, by the way, in Gaza.

#Jacques

And they have closed the crossing. They have closed the Gaza crossing, you know.

#Jacques

They are occupying more than 70% of Gaza, which is a sovereign territory. Gaza is part of the state of Palestine, which is recognized by the UN, period. But in addition to that, Israel has decided to attack another sovereign and independent country, which is Lebanon. Because they know that the Lebanese army is not in a position to resist because of corruption, and also because of the West, because the West has always made every effort to keep the Lebanese army as weak as possible, in particular the French. And that's the reason why Hezbollah becomes the most important resistance force in Lebanon, by the way.

But the thing is that because Israel is attacking not just the territory of Lebanon, but also the civilian population of Lebanon, then the Yemenis are doing exactly the same principle. They're applying the R2P, the Responsibility to Protect. And since the first two pillars have still failed also for Lebanon, they applied the third pillar, which is their own intervention in order to force Israel into a ceasefire or to cease their attack against the civilians. So we see that Israel, for some reason—because there was absolutely no reason to attack Lebanon. In fact, they had a ceasefire. Hezbollah was respecting the ceasefire, was ready to respect the ceasefire.

The problem is that Israel never respected it, prompting a response from Hezbollah. Had the Israelis completely withdrawn from Lebanon, I mean, Hezbollah would have no reason to attack Israel and the situation would be fine. The problem is Israel never complied with this agreement, as it has not complied with Golan, by the way, nor has it complied with the other Palestinian territory, prompting others to intervene. And that's the situation. So you just have to go back to all the resolutions, because you have a lot of people who said, well, Israel has the right to defend and things like this. You don't have the right to defend when you provoke the war. This is the first thing.

Technically, when you have a territory which is under occupation, such as Gaza, for instance, you don't have the right to defend. Period. That's technically decided. It's a legal issue. It's not the idea of Jacobo or whoever. This is simply a legal issue. You have the right to defend if, for instance, Jordan would attack or, let's say, Egypt would attack Israel. Then Israel has the right to defend itself. But if Israel is attacking Palestinians on the Palestinian territory, which is an occupied territory, there is no right to defend itself, legally speaking. And if you attack Lebanon, then you say you have the right to defend. Well, you are attacking, you are occupying territory in Lebanon.

The purpose of Hezbollah—Hezbollah has no claim over Israeli territory. You know, it's not the Palestinians. You can argue that. You can say the Palestinians have a claim over the whole of Palestine. Both parties, both the Israelis—or the Zionists, better said—and the Palestinians have the same motto: from the sea to the river, you know, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. Both parties, both of them. In fact, the expression came first from the Zionists; in fact, it's a Zionist expression that the Palestinians have taken over. But in any case, you can argue on that, even if since 1993, the Palestinians have agreed and are happy with the fact that you have two states.

I mean, the so-called Palestinian territory, occupied territory or Palestinian territory, which is Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. So that's what the Palestinians have officially declared as fine with them, including Hamas. Including Hamas has said so. So we could have here a solution, by the way. But you can still argue that some Arabs may claim some part of the Israeli territory or things like that. Okay, fine. But it's not the case with Hezbollah. Hezbollah is very fine with southern Lebanon. They just ask Israel to get out of southern Lebanon. That's it. And that's something that Israel has refused to do since 1982. So that's the rationale for the existence of Hezbollah.

And of course, you have a lot of disinformation that is propagated, especially by the US. Although if you talk to US intelligence, they know that it is fake disinformation. But if you go to France, for

instance, or Germany, they don't acknowledge that this is disinformation. They assume that; they just repeat what the Israelis do. And the problem with those countries, which are very important in the European Union, is that those two countries, both Germany and France, were the ones who most participated in the Holocaust in the Second World War. That's the reason why they have this sentiment of guilt that is today hampering decisions that would help humanity at large to move ahead.

And those two countries, both France and Germany, have not understood exactly the lessons of the Second World War. The lessons of World War II were not that the Jews were okay and the others were not okay, or things like this. This is not the lesson. The lesson is that international law should prevail. That's the lesson, that we should not have countries that can misuse international law for their own purpose. International law should rule the world. That's the main lesson of World War II. And that's exactly what the French and Germans do not apply. And that's the reason why they never reacted when Israel was breaching international law.

But the US is a little bit different because they feel, since the Cold War, that they have a strategic interest in keeping Israel there and keeping their support for Israel. Okay, it doesn't provide an excuse for infringing international law. But at least there is a strategic explanation. You can say they have a national interest to keep Israel at all costs. Okay, why not? But if you look at the Europeans, they don't have this rationale. And that's why I'm very, very critical of the Europeans—more of the Europeans than of the Americans, by the way. Not because I think that the Americans are more right than the others. This is not what I mean. But at least there is a national interest.

There's a logic. You know, it's exactly the same as when they wanted to attack Iraq. We all know that the rationale was wrong, that the claims were false and all that. But for some reason, they wanted to do that. And I said, again, don't misunderstand me, this is no justification whatsoever. But I said, okay, there is a logic. They want to do something, and they will manipulate opinion to do so. But I'm always more critical of those countries who understand that it was wrong. They have absolutely no interest in having a war, but they still allow a war to happen. You know, if you feel that it's in your interest to have a war, okay, I will be critical about this, but I say, okay, there is a logic. But what about the Europeans who have absolutely no national interest in that whatsoever, but they still accept it?

You know, there is an element of cowardice in Europe that disturbs me profoundly. There are a lot of lies and hypocrisy in the US, no question about this. But at least they are consistent with what they feel as a national objective or national interest. While in Europe, we allow things that are not even in our national interest. We allow things that are absolutely, even contrary to our interests, totally contrary to our values. We don't get any benefit from that. So why do we allow this? It's even more stupid. So that's the whole contradiction in this situation—that we allow things despite the fact that nobody benefits from that. And in fact, even Israel has not benefited at all. It's the most despised country in the world. A lot of countries will not be able to resume delivering weapons.

How can you justify delivering weapons to a country that kills children, women, medical facilities, and all that? You cannot. You cannot justify this. And therefore, what does Israel win? And here we come to the next point, that in fact, the world is simply supporting Netanyahu in his current position so he can avoid the legal proceedings against him. That's all. And that's exactly, by the way, what Donald Trump told him. That is, the support that he received from the US, slash Donald Trump, is simply to stay in power. And recently, apparently, in a phone call that Trump had with Netanyahu, he told him that, apparently. So we see that we have here a war that claims a lot of human life, destruction, and things like this, just to keep one person in power.

#Jacques

I mean, this is simply crazy. You know, the problem, Colonel, with Israel is that they don't perceive how deep and problematic the situation is for them as time goes by, because the United States is a superpower. But as you mentioned, when it comes to the West Asia region, the United States had everything before this war started. They had the bases. They had the money from GCC countries supporting those bases and the American presence in the region. They had the Israelis together with them. And all these forces coming together, they couldn't defeat Iran. That's the reality of what has happened so far.

And they couldn't. You know, the United States is a superpower, but when it comes to the region, they're not even a regional power. They're not, because Israel was not able to. And the capabilities are, when it comes to interceptors and missiles, they have a shortage. They cannot physically continue the war somehow. And the problem is current right now with the blockade that is happening. Donald Trump just announced that the blockade will remain in place and in full force and effect until the final deal is reached. I don't see the final deal coming anytime soon. And here we had the Iranian military advisor, General Rezaei, who had an interview on CNN. Here is what he said in terms of the blockade.

#Nima

If the war continues and the naval blockade is not lifted, we will drag the war to the Indian Ocean, the Bab al-Mandab Strait, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean, and we will give another dimension to the war by attacking those other American bases that we have been attacking so far. America will definitely suffer much more losses. America's losses will be very heavy.

#Jacques

This is the blockade that Donald Trump is defining. And he said, I would say they're going to do the same thing that Rezaei just said to us. And because they're honest in a way, because they said it before the war started, and right now they're talking about if the blockade continues, we're going to do this. And what would be the response on the part of the United States? Are they prepared for that?

#Jacques

Well, the problem is that, first of all, Donald Trump may change his mind from one day to another, and we know that. That's fine. But remember that the Iranian issue is a bipartisan issue in the United States. And you have people who are even more fanatic than Donald Trump is. I think Donald Trump got entangled in this conflict a little bit because he didn't realize that. He was too naive somehow. Again, I'm convinced that the Israelis have identified that he's a weak person, and they wanted to have him involved in the war before the elections, because later, if there was a change in Congress, he would probably not have the same support, and that would have changed the whole setting. But they understood that Trump is a weak president in reality. That's a reality. And that's the problem.

#Jacques

The reality is also that when we talk about Iran, when you talk about Russia, when you talk about Venezuela, when you talk about Cuba, we are talking here about bipartisan issues. Whether Democrat or Republican, people don't even know why, but they are against those countries. And they are ready to destroy these countries, and they are ready to intervene, and they are ready to do this and that and all. And they still think that they have enough power to address all these countries and destroy them, which is probably easier with some countries than with others. Iran is certainly something too big for the U.S. to swallow. That's certainly true. But they haven't realized this.

Because for them, Iran is just like Iraq. Iraq crumbled very quickly, and they think that it would be the same in Iran. So that's a little bit the picture that they have. Meaning that, yes, we see the situation today, but what we have to consider also is that in the U.S., you still have, at least at the level of the so-called elites—not popular support, but in the elite—a strong support for Israel, because they don't care if Israel kills civilians and things like this. They are mostly religious. I mean, even the Christian Zionists are, in fact, a blind support to Israel. So that's one thing. But Israel realizes also that it is in a difficult situation.

I mean, if you look, for instance, Israel has now decided to have a communication budget of \$750 million. Seven hundred fifty million—so three quarters of a billion dollars just for communication—because they realized that the image of Israel has completely deteriorated in the whole world. And that even in the Middle East, even if you had, I mean, probably people who did not have a big esteem for Israel, at best they were indifferent, and they were ready to—I mean, they would just turn a blind eye to what Israel does. But today it's different. Even Saudi Arabia and the UAE—not yet, but other countries who probably had a more kind of neutral stance toward Israel—today realize that Israel is a problem.

A regional problem, I mean. And Israel starts to understand that the tide is changing and that for them, the situation becomes more difficult. That's why it is even more important for Israel to keep

the U.S. under control. And as of today, it's easier to have the U.S. under control than it might be with other presidents. You may have other presidents who are more reasonable. They might still be supportive of Israel. I don't see that changing in the U.S., but you may have presidents who are wiser than Donald Trump and not simply blinded by the mirage of an almighty U.S. Because that's a little bit the problem with Trump.

He's so convinced that the U.S. is the best, the strongest, the biggest, the bestest—everything is “biggest,” “strongest,” and so on and so forth. And that's more like a psychological stance than a fact on the ground or a fact-based assessment. And with Trump, it's like this. Trump is ready to accept every challenge because he understands that the U.S.—I mean, in his mind, the U.S. can address any kind of challenge because they are the best. With a more realistic president who would put more emphasis on making America great again—because saying that America is great again is one thing, but making America great again is another thing—and so far, it's not the case.

And in fact, if you look at some figures, probably not all, but a lot of them, you can see that since Donald Trump has come into power, America has not been made great again. And in fact, it's declining fast. And another president may then be forced to abandon all these ideas, even those military bases and things like that, that used to be a symbol of power and power projection and things like this. But today, it's not a demonstration of strength. It's a demonstration of weakness because these bases, regardless of how many aircraft they had and how many radars and all that they had, in fact, they were not able to provide the protection that those Arab countries expected, and not even Israel, by the way. So, meaning that the U.S. has become a paper tiger. And that's a little bit of the problem. So I think people start to realize this.

People start to realize this in the U.S. And of course, one aspect of this consciousness in the U.S. is also because Trump is not a president that has been appreciated in the rest of the world, not even in the U.S. probably. He's a president that is polarizing the society—those who are extremely in favor and those who are extremely against. That's something you didn't have with other presidents. You had people who were against or in favor, but with Trump, everything goes into the extreme. Either you are extremely against or you are extremely in favor, but it's hard to be half in favor, so to say. That's a little bit... but with another president, you may have more consensus around some more reasonable policies. So this is also why you have a window of opportunity for Netanyahu to do things as Trump is still in power.

Because my view, again, I may be wrong and I don't have any crystal ball, but I may understand that even with people like J.D. Vance—and let's assume J.D. Vance would be president, and he might be the next president, by the way, I don't know, but it's possible—I'm not sure such a conflict would have happened. And I'm not saying that J.D. Vance is a moderate. He's certainly not. But he's a little bit wiser than Donald Trump. And he is probably wiser in the sense that he is more capable of setting priorities. Trump has no priorities, he just reacts. He's a tweeter, you know, he tweets and he reacts to tweets. And first is his ego, period. Well, I think that others—I'm saying J.D. Vance, but maybe anybody else—people are probably more rational in their decision-making. And that's

probably something that may change. And that's the reason why Netanyahu needs someone like Donald Trump. That's a problem.

#Jacques

I think with J.D. Vance, he just is less important than Kamala Harris in the Biden administration. He's just disappearing from the scene. You don't see J.D. Vance anymore.

#Jacques

Well, probably for different reasons than Kamala Harris. Kamala Harris was not somebody very capable. I think J.D. Vance is capable. But I think he understands that his interest is not to have too high a profile in this administration because he doesn't want to show that he's supporting that. He understands that a lot of policies are erratic, not very well thought through, and therefore he doesn't want to expose himself to that. That's my personal view. I may be wrong. I'm not an expert in U.S. domestic politics, but that's my personal view. Kamala Harris is a person that has been selected just because she was a woman or things like that, but I'm not sure she was capable of doing the business of president, for instance.

I don't think so. J.D. Vance is probably more capable. I think he's an intelligent person. But he understands, because he's someone who thinks a little bit more than Donald Trump. Donald Trump is an instinctive person. He's an animal—I don't want to use that in a pejorative sense—but he's an animal, a political animal that reacts very strongly. And he is like a bull.

#Jacques

And caves even more strongly. Sorry? And caves even more strongly. Yeah, reacts and caves.

#Jacques

He's like a bull, you know. He reacts very quickly. But there is no measure, no moderation in the way he reacts. I think J.D. Vance would have probably taken the whole issue of Iran with much more distance than Donald Trump did. And probably, I think even the whole conflict would not have happened, at least not in this form. It would maybe have been some other sanctions and things like this, that's most probable, but not in the way of an open conflict. Again, you know, it's totally speculative because I don't know J.D. Vance personally. I'm not an expert in U.S. domestic politics, and I may be totally wrong. What I want to say is that Donald Trump is something very exotic in the U.S. political landscape. He has always been somebody, even during his first mandate, by the way, very exotic. There is nothing like Donald Trump in that sense.

This is very funny to look at, but this is something exceptional. But he has inherent vulnerabilities—his way of addressing problems, his way of putting himself in the center of the stage—is in fact a

weakness of Donald Trump because he wants to show off all the time. And that's exactly what Netanyahu has identified. I think Netanyahu was already in power with Trump, with Bush, with all these guys, Biden, but he never managed to have Donald Trump, to have the president attacking Iran. He has asked many times to the former presidents, but only Donald Trump accepted that. So that shows that despite the image he wants to project, Donald Trump is a weak person. And that's exactly what Netanyahu has identified. And that's, I think, the weak point of the U.S. And that's also the reason why I think Netanyahu needed to do that now, because he doesn't know what will happen next.

#Jacques

I think you're right about Donald Trump. And about J.D. Vance, I don't see the guy as totally in the hands of...

#Jacques

I'm not saying that J.D. Vance is the best person. I'm not making any judgment on that. This is not the question. And I don't even want to fight on this because, again, my expertise is limited on that. But my feeling is that we cannot compare Vance with Kamala Harris. He is much more capable than Kamala Harris was, that's for sure. And my view is that he is also, you know, he's not a moderate in that sense. J.D. Vance accepted this position as vice president for a reason. I mean, he is definitely someone who is a hardcore Christian and all that, and all this background thing.

But from an intellectual point of view, J.D. Vance is probably someone who will think twice before engaging in a conflict, rather than Trump. Trump will not think; he will just feel in order to make a decision. J.D. Vance will think before making a decision. It may come to a bad decision as well. I'm not saying this is the—and again, I don't have any crystal ball—but my feeling is that J.D. Vance is a person that would think before. Donald Trump goes very well with Pete Exet, for instance. The style is slightly different, but by and large, it's the same kind of people. J.D. Vance is different.

#Jacques

And my personal view is that I would prefer a president like J.D. Vance. Because, again, I'm not sure he will always make good decisions. Everybody can make bad decisions. But I'm pretty sure that he would make his decisions based on more thinking, not just on gut. It would be brain-driven decisions rather than gut-driven decisions. That's my personal view. And again, that doesn't prevent him from making mistakes. But I would rather trust J.D. Vance than Donald Trump, for instance, personally. That's my personal view. But again, you may have a different view on that. And again, I'm convinced that if J.D. Vance were president, this conflict would not have happened, or not in that form. There would still be a problem with Iran. This is definitely true because, as I said, it's a bipartisan problem, and it's so emotional in the U.S. polity that you cannot avoid this.

This has been like this, and it will require a couple of generations—I mean, political generations—before this changes. But the conflict would take a different form. It would probably not take the form of strikes and things like this, or the threat of invasion. And one day you threaten Iran with invasion, the next day you say you want a ceasefire, the next day you strike them, the next day you make a blockade, the next day you ask for a ceasefire, the next day you attack again. This is completely erratic. This kind of thing, in my view, would not have happened with J.D. Vance, not in this form. I'm not saying it would be peace with Iran, but it would certainly not be the conflict in the so erratic way that we are witnessing today.

#Jacques

Yeah, yeah. I can agree on that. That would be different from Donald Trump. Thank you so much, Col. Jacques Baud, for being with us today. Great pleasure.

#Jacques

My pleasure. Thank you for inviting me. Thank you.